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THE

Christian Visitor.

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The Memorial.

BLESSED IS HE THAT CONSIDERETH THE POOR:
THE LORD WILL DELIVER HIM IN TIME OF TROUBLE.
THE LORD WILL STRENGTHEN HIM UPON THE BED OF LANGUISHING:
THOU WILT MAKE ALL HIS BED, IN HIS SICKNESS.

PSALM XLI. 1. 3.

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THE

CHRISTIAN VISITOR:

OR,

Scripture Readings,

WITH

EXPOSITIONS, AND PRAYERS:

DESIGNED TO ASSIST

THE FRIENDS OF THE POOR AND AFFLICTED.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM JOWETT, M.A.

LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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RICHARD WATTS, CROWN COURT, TEMPLE BAR.

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PREFACE.

THE Design of this little Volume is sufficiently explained in its Title. A short account, however, of the manner in which it eventually was written, may help Christian Friends in the use of it.

The Writer was accustomed, more than twenty years ago, when he had Pastoral Duties in a large Provincial Town, to carry with him a Bible or Testament, in which he had marked Select Passages, in the Margin, with a broad ink-line; so that, in visiting the Poor and Sick, the eye might readily turn to some portion of the Word of God suitable to their case. This is nothing more, he is aware, than what is done by many Ministers and Benevolent Christians, who seek out the Poor, for the purpose of teaching them the things necessary to their Salvation: but it is here mentioned, because the habit, early formed, has been found by the Author

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useful to him in many after-scenes of his life; in the parlour, in the prison, in the hospital, in the cottage, and the sick-chamber; in voyages, in journeys, and sometimes in scenes where he has been suddenly called to speak to dying persons, who perhaps never before heard the Gospel. Such was the case with a young Englishman, whom he found (in 1819) in a distant part of Egypt, languishing, and almost senseless; to whom there was just time, before his death, to speak of the Saviour, from the passage with which this Volume opens, "The Faithful Saying."

Now, however, during a residence of five years in or near this great Metropolis, the Writer daily perceives, that there are myriads of his Fellow-Countrymen living in the lowest depths of ignorance, sin and misery: and he has sometimes been led to think, that it may be easier to go forth as a Missionary to Malta, to India, or to China, than to reach the wants of these multitudes, who are perishing within a short distance of our own doors.

Both objects, however, must, according to our abilities, be aimed at; Foreign Missions, and Home-Labours. And where we cannot do much, we must attempt a little; not hiding our *one talent*.

It has ever appeared to the Author, that one of the most desirable of Talents, would be, the art of

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making short visits to the Poor, saying to them something easy to be remembered, but truly Christian, friendly and useful. For, let us only a moment consider their circumstances.—We call: for the most part, we find their small dwellings in confusion: the husband, out at work: the wife, harassed with the little children all about: something going on wrong: a noise, a cry, possibly a quarrel: some sick; others, perhaps, not quite sober. Think, too, of the seemingly-desperate immoral state of thousands: intemperance and vice have debased, or destroyed, more than half the powers of their understanding, their faculty of attending, or their memory. Multitudes are found so depraved and diseased, that they seem to have scarcely any mind or conscience left: and this, in many cases, at a very early age. Oh! the awful power of Sin and Satan! Then these unhappy creatures are so numerous, that, to do many of them good, visits *must* be short; or we should be spending all our time and strength upon only a few.

But, can much good be done in a short visit? Yes. When there is a single purpose, a word from God, a short fervent prayer, and a little act of charity, ten minutes *may do* as much good as twenty. Much may sometimes be done in five minutes. Yea, even *one* sentence may be blessed, in

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turning a sinner from the error of his ways.—The Writer of these pages fears, chiefly, lest he should have made his Addresses rather too long; considering the design which he had in view. Should this be found sometimes to be the case, two or three paragraphs may easily be selected, as forming by themselves a complete sense. Or, recourse may be had to the later pages of this Volume, where single sentences are given. The same remark may be applied to some of the Prayers; a few sentences of which will be as much, as very sick persons would be able to attend to. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Further, it may be considered, that, if we make short visits, we may make them the oftener: and this is particularly desirable. Those of the Poor, that are going on well, like to be looked in upon frequently: and those that are not going on well, need it.

In considering who are the Persons that may use this little Volume, the Writer would respectfully suggest, that it may, for a while, prove a useful Manual to his younger Brethren in the Ministry. He would, indeed, trust that it will not be long ere they lay it aside; after having acquired the faculty and habit of offering, from their own hearts, a few sentences, explaining and applying Scripture, to

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those whom they may visit. This is our proper office; and it is confessed, that written Addresses are a very imperfect substitute for free, extemporaneous Discourse.

But, further, it is hoped that this work may prove advantageous, in assisting the labours of many others, who are piously engaged as Visitors of the Sick and Poor. Many Females, born to every comfort, and trained to every useful accomplishment of life, account it their honour to devote a portion of their time to this blessed employment: other Individuals, possessed of affluence and rank, yet deem it a Christian privilege to enter the abodes of sorrow, and of humble piety; and very many, in all situations of life, unsparingly allot their leisure moments to this labour of love. It is felt by them, that, not in the great Congregation alone, not only in Family Worship, not even in the Closet, are their best lessons always learned: these are better learned, often, when the circle around us is a room full of poor sufferers, or when our visits lead us to the sick-bed of some poor, humble, dying Saint. There the Saviour is found to be unspeakably precious; and the mind of Christ is more copiously imbibed by the Visitor, while he is doing the work of his Master, in showing pity to his poor and afflicted Members. Yet such Individuals may very often

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feel diffident of their power and ability to expound a passage of Scripture: and they may, therefore, be not unthankful for the occasional assistance of a little Manual like this.

A short Prayer is added at the end of each Reading: for it is often found that the Poor and Afflicted, if they are willing to hear the Bible, are willing, also, to join in Prayer. It is very desirable, in such cases, that the Petitions offered up should have a certain degree of connexion with what has been just read, or conversed upon. Prayer, we should ever remember, is the great method appointed by God for obtaining every blessing: and however hurried or confused the family visited may, at first sight, appear to be, yet a few calm words of Devotion will seldom fail to quiet the most disturbed hearts, and to cheer the saddest.

The design and use of the Scripture Verses at the end of the Volume, are sufficiently explained in the Prefatory Remarks with which they open.

The manner in which it is recommended that these Addresses should be used, is, not as Tracts to be left at a Cottage. But it is suggested, that the pious Visitor should previously meditate on the Portion of Scripture to be explained; and then, with his heart full of it, read slowly, and, if he pleases, comment a little on the Exposition that follows; parti-

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cularly, in a Catechetical or examining way. And this may often be done very naturally, if young persons are present. But it is especially recommended, that the Portions be *read to* the Poor, rather than left to be *looked at by* them: though sometimes the Book may be left afterwards, that they may read the Portion to one another. For a Tract left, is not always read; and even if it be, yet, in reading with the eye, the thoughts travel too fast; but in reading aloud, (if I may alter Milton's expression a little,) the Human Voice Divine sends the sacred thought flowing on more warmly to the heart of every hearer.

Remembering that the Sick cannot attend to much, and that the uneducated do not well understand, the Writer has been careful to use plain words, and simple sentences. Yet he believes that most of these Addresses will bear reading over a second time, to those among the Poor who are not generally in the habit of hearing discourses on Religion. To them, the simplest religious statements have a considerable degree of obscurity; and the language of Scripture itself is, to such persons, a perfect novelty.

Most of the passages of Scripture here expounded have been used by the Writer many times, when visiting the Poor and Sick. A few of the others

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have been suggested to his thoughts, and the Comment has been mentally composed, as he was passing rapidly through the crowded streets, or squalid alleys, of this Metropolis; while pressing engagements left him only time to muse, as he moved on, what *ought* to be said to the dying souls around, if leisure could have been had. He entreats, therefore, such benevolent persons as can command the time, and who may possess this Manual, to read to the Poor a little of what his heart has indited for them. The Portions of Scripture selected will also be equally useful in our Provincial Towns, and, indeed, in every Cottage of the land. Thankful will the Writer be, if he should thus speak to some hundreds of his dying fellow-sinners.

And if, peradventure, this little Volume should find its way into some of the Mansions of the Rich; if it should attend them to their inner chamber, where weariness, and sickness, and disappointments, and conscience, all remind them that this world can make no man happy; if they feel that the past is without relish, the present without rest, and the prospects of the future almost without hope to them —oh, that they also (needing as they do the very same consolations as the poorest outcast from Society) may discover that THERE IS MERCY YET! Oh, that all may taste, once and for ever, the

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blessings expressed in the name of JESUS, the Saviour: whom to know, is Life Eternal!

But it is time to close these remarks. The world is too gay, or too busy, and books far too numerous, to admit any one to be heard, beyond a few moments. In these Short Addresses, my wish only is, to let fall one more drop of Mercy into an ocean of misery.

LONDON,
Nov. 18, 1835.

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SCRIPTURE READINGS.

I.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

1 Timothy, i. 15, 16.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.

When we read the Bible, it is a great comfort to know that it is all true. The Bible was given to us by God himself, who cannot lie.

The faithful saying which God has given in it, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, is the most precious that can be offered to us miserable sinners. If we had no faithful sayings, like this, we must live and die without hope. Let us welcome these glad tidings, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!

When He came into the world, he did not come into it because it was a happy place; but because it was a miserable place, full of sin. He did not come to enjoy it; but to die for it, and that the world by Him might be saved. And whosoever

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believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Do *you* believe in Him? Do you feel that you want a Saviour? Do you feel the burden of your sins? Do you feel like a sick man, that needs a Physician? If you feel this, you will be ready to come to Christ, and cry out, "Lord, heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee!" And He will not cast out your prayer.

Perhaps you think yourself too great a sinner to be pardoned. But he is ready to save even the chief of sinners. The vilest may come to Him, and may remind Him of His own promise; how he said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Many think that great sinners are the hardest to save. Yet these are often the first to come to Christ. And he delights in showing his Almighty power, by saving to the uttermost.

St. Paul (who before his conversion was named Saul) is a pattern to us. He was a monument of grace, set up to be looked at throughout all generations; that all may be assured of the pardoning love of Christ. As he was forgiven, so may we be.

Have *you* ever persecuted the godly? St. Paul had once been a persecutor. Have you hated the Gospel? Have you disliked the House of God? Have you been unkind to pious people? Have you been living after the course of this world, serving divers lusts and pleasures? Still, if you turn to God, and believe in His Son Jesus Christ,

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he is ready to deliver you from all your sins, to blot them out, and to save your soul with an everlasting salvation.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; blessed be thy name, that ever we heard the glad tidings of the Gospel! While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: and still He is ready to seek and to save them that are lost. Have mercy upon us, though we are the chief of sinners! Pardon us, if ever we have hindered thy Gospel, slighted thy Ministers, or persecuted thy people. Let our lot now be with thy Children; and give us the blessings of pardon and peace with thee, our God. Enable us, also, to bring others to know and love this gracious Saviour. Open our mouths, that we may speak his praises, and tell others what he hath done for our souls. We ask these mercies for the glory of thy name, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD.

GENESIS iii. 1—13.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the

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garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

EVERY body sees that there is much sin in the world. The Bible is the only book which tells us how it entered.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created by God, in his own image. They were perfectly holy, just, and good. They knew God, and loved him. But Satan, the author of all evil, the enemy

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of God and man, tempted them. Our parents were deceived by the temptation: they fell from their state of innocence, and lost the image of God in their souls. Their children, and children's children, were born in sin: for, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." We, and all mankind, are born "children of wrath." Like David, each of us must confess, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The different marks of sin in Adam and Eve are copied so closely by us, that it will be well to notice them, one by one. And while we do so, may the Holy Spirit deeply convince us of our own sinful state!

1. The first thing to notice is, that Eve allowed herself to talk with the serpent. Sin is very deceitful at first: it comes in a pleasant way. We ought to be on our guard, and not listen for a moment to the tempter. Never parley with sin. And never talk, even about religious subjects, with careless sinners, merely for conversation's sake.

2. The next thing to notice is, Eve's curiosity in gazing at the tree which she was forbidden to eat of. So do we very often gaze on forbidden objects. We think we will only just look at them. But when we have allowed ourselves to look, we find it hard to take our eyes off. We soon begin to long after them; and then Satan has gained his first advantage over us. The wandering eye may lead us to the very vilest sins.

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3. Eve seems also to have been tempted by her taste. She "saw that the tree was good for food." She thought so, as she looked at it. So, when we first indulge the taste of things forbidden, their taste seems very sweet, and, for a time, sweeter and sweeter. But, at the last, sin bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.

4. Eve saw that this was a tree to be desired, to make one wise. She wished to be wiser, than God intended her to be. This, again, is a very common temptation. Many young persons wish to read books which they ought not. And grown-up persons are ready to meddle with things that are too high for them. "Vain man would be wise;" and he would be wise in his own way, not by learning from God.

5. Satan said to our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods." This is just what men wish to be. They long to be independent; to follow their own understanding; to go out into the world as their own masters; to have nobody to keep them in. Especially, they cannot bear to have God for their Master. They will not be checked by conscience. They set up to be wiser than the Bible. They fall to disputing about the Bible, or against it, or without it. "Now," they say, "we will be as gods." But now it is, that the devil has gained a great victory over them. Now it is that they become proud, headstrong, and blasphemous.

6. Moreover, Satan told our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die:" and they believed him, rather

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than God. The dying and the dead tell us, by millions, that God was true, and Satan false. The world is a grave, continually opening to receive the dead. Still men go on in sin, believing the devil rather than God. They cannot, indeed, now say, "We shall not die;" but they say, "We shall not die soon." Or they say, "We shall not, when we die, go to hell—there is no such place." The devil wishes sinners to believe that there is no devil, no hell. Thus it is that multitudes travel on to the first death, and to the second death; still believing Satan, and saying, "It shall be well with us in the end." Till, at the last, in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments.

7. Another very common sin is, having hard thoughts of God. Satan said to Eve: "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods." In the same way many people complain, "The laws of God are very hard, they are only made to keep me from pleasure." How soon do young persons begin to say, "I wish my parents, or my master, were not so strict: they are only keeping me from my rights." This spirit is really the same as rebelling against God. But, alas! we are all of us continually thinking that God deals hardly by us. There is scarcely any sin so common, as impatience. Yet it is a sin, which directly flies in the face of God. Whenever we are impatient, we are, in reality, quarrelling with what God appoints.

We will consider the other marks of temptation

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and sin another time. These are quite enough to meditate upon, for the present. May the Lord humble us by his Spirit; and lead us to bow down before Him, crying for mercy through Jesus Christ! For the sake of his dear Son, Jesus Christ, he is ready to pardon all our sins, though they may be more in number than the hairs of our head. Though we were born in sin, yet, by his Holy Spirit, our souls may be born again. Oh, may that Spirit be given to us; that we may abhor ourselves for our sinfulness, and learn to love the right ways of the Lord!

PRAYER.

O most holy Lord God, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; how vile and abominable must we appear in thy sight! For thou hast known all the thoughts of our hearts, and all our wanderings, from our childhood and youth upward, even unto this day. We were born in sin, and in sin have we lived. Gracious Father, renew and sanctify our souls; write thy law in our hearts; hide thy face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities. And grant us thy continual grace, that, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, we may ever serve thee in newness of life, and devote ourselves to love, honour, and obey thee, in all our ways, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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III.

THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD.

(*Continued.*)

GENESIS iii. 1—13. (See page 3.)

WE have not, as yet, described all the different marks of sin, in which we follow the example of our first parents. It is a very painful thing to meditate upon our own vileness; but we had better know the worst of ourselves, that so we may be led to seek for pardon and reconciliation with God, through Christ's atoning blood.

8. The next thing we observe is, How one sinner tempts others to share in sin. "Eve took of the fruit, and gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Alas! how many can say, "I never knew of this sin, or that sin, till I was told of it by others." Those with whom we have most to do, those that we keep company with, aye, those that we love the most, may be our worst enemies: for surely no enemy is so much to be feared, as he who tempts us to sin. And though persons of the same family may seem to love one another very much, yet if they tempt one another to sin, or if they live together without Religion, there can be no lasting happiness among them. Unless we cherish the love of God in our hearts, and keep close to him, the most lovely of our fellow-creatures may lead us the farthest from God; just as Eve helped to ruin Adam.

9. But, in the next place, it is mournful to see,

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How Adam was over-persuaded by his wife.—He ought to have reproved her. He ought to have prayed to God to pardon and restore her: instead of which, he falls into the same sin, and becomes quite as guilty as she. Therefore St. Paul, putting them both together as one, says, "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

10. And now we come to notice the worst mark of all;—and yet it is the least regarded by sinners themselves. It is, the sin of endeavouring to hide ourselves from God; shunning the presence of the ever-blessed God! It is said, that when Adam and his wife heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. They no more loved God: they only feared him, and endeavoured to fly from him. They depart from the Living God! And such, alas! is the real state of all sinners. The presence of God is not desired by them; his name is painful to them; his worship is wearisome. They do not pray to him in secret. They do not love his holy word. They make no hearty preparations for meeting him at the judgment-day. They take no delight in thinking of the holiness and happiness of heaven. They try *not* to think of God, and are offended with those who speak to them about Religion. These words they do not even understand, "Communion with God." This want of communion with God is their greatest sin: it is also their greatest misery. But sinners are so far

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gone in sin, that they do not know how great a misery this is. God is love, and in his presence is fulness of joy: but sinners shun this holy God, and vainly fly from him.

11. Another very common thing with sinners is, Making excuses, and throwing the blame on others. When Adam and Eve are called to give account of themselves, Adam throws the blame on his wife, and partly on God himself; while Eve throws the blame on the serpent. But in vain does any sinner ask of God, "Why hast thou made me thus?"—or, "Why was I born into a world of sin?"—or, "Why do I inherit a body of sin and death?" In vain do sinners reproach one another. In vain do they curse the devil for tempting and destroying them. What a dreadful place must hell be, where lost souls and devils are for ever cursing God and one another, yet find no rest from their torments! Others are to blame, as well as ourselves. Especially, tempters are a most cruel race. But every man shall bear his own iniquity. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

O sinner! (and I speak to myself, as well as unto thee) dost thou not behold many of these deadly marks of sin in thyself? Search, and examine. Be willing to know the worst. Then thou wilt desire the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. For, blessed be God! we are not in hell, though we deserve it. God accuses us; conscience condemns us; and the devil desires to have us. But the voice of mercy cries, "Deliver him from going

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down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Christ is that ransom. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "Whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Look, then, at all these marks of sin in yourself, one by one. But look, also, on the wounds of your bleeding Saviour. Fly to Him, in faith; remembering this declaration in the word of God: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

PRAYER.

O Lord, what shall we say unto thee, or what shall we speak, or how shall we clear ourselves, when we remember how grievously we have sinned against thee? Suffer us not to think of hiding ourselves from thy sight: for thine eye hath been over us continually, and thou knowest us far better than we know ourselves. But bring us to a godly repentance, and hatred of sin: may we loathe ourselves at the remembrance of it. And, oh, lead us to that Fountain which is open for sin and for uncleanness, that in it may we wash and be clean! May the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanse us from all sin! See if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting, for Jesus Christ's sake.

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IV.

THE CURSE AND THE PROMISE.

GENESIS iii. 14—24.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever;

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

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WHEN Adam and Eve fell in Paradise, the serpent, who had deceived them, was the first to receive sentence of condemnation. The curse, pronounced upon him by God, was very dreadful. Because Satan had done this cruel thing, bringing sin and death into the world, therefore no mercy was shown to him. The wrath of God is upon the devil and his angels eternally. In pronouncing this curse, God mingled with it a remarkable promise of redemption to man. Let us consider these particulars.

When we consider the condemnation of that old serpent, the devil, we shall find, from Scripture, that his condemnation is dreadful, beyond all that we can conceive: he is condemned to the lowest hell. Our Saviour speaks of "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

When St. Jude, in his Epistle, speaks of "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," (that is to say, the devil and his angels, who fell from heaven,) he adds, that God hath "reserved them in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." And St. John describes the manner in which "an angel came down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand;" and how he "laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan," and bound him in hell.

But when God pronounced this curse upon Satan, he declared that he would put enmity between Satan and his seed on the one side, and the

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woman and her seed on the other side. Here is a great doctrine. It signifies, that Satan and all the children of disobedience, who are children of the devil, will always be fighting against Jesus Christ: for Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, is "the seed of the woman" here meant. And not only against him will they make war, but also against all true disciples of Christ. But then it is also declared, that Christ will gain the victory. We will give several examples of this.

Cain, the first-born of Adam and Eve, was of that wicked one, the devil. The devil was a murderer from the beginning; and he stirred up the heart of Cain to murder his brother Abel. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Here was the first instance of Satan's enmity against the children of God. But Abel was exalted to heaven, and is had in everlasting remembrance. Thus was Satan's enmity overcome; while Cain was driven out as a vagabond, with a mark set upon him.

Just before the Flood, the world had fallen into a most dreadful state. "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Violence is one of the ways in which Satan endeavours to destroy mankind. Still, the race of man was not lost; though it depended on one man's family. Noah and his family were saved in the ark: and this ark was also intended to show forth the Church of Christ; which will always be safe, even when the world comes to the worst.

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There are many more things, which we will say another time, on this subject. But let me now ask you one or two questions. Have you ever felt anger and hatred dwelling in your heart? I fear that all of us have sometimes fallen into sinful tempers. But what a dreadful thing this is! It is like carrying a serpent in our bosom. Nay, it is really having the devil in our hearts. Have you sometimes been violent, or cruel? Have you fallen to blows and curses? What a mercy it is, that, in our angry moments, we have not gone so far as murder! But, remember, "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." And he that says, "Thou fool," is in danger of hell fire. And what a dreadful thing it is, when a whole neighbourhood is filled with noise and violence, so that there is scarce one righteous family among them! It is like the devil broke loose on earth.

The good Lord forgive us all those sins in which we have been so much like the devil; and may he make us like his own dear Son, whose soul was gentle as a lamb!

PRAYER.

O most holy God! who can tell what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from thee; and how dreadful is the portion of those, who are banished from thy presence for ever? Wonderful is thy mercy, that we have not long since been shut up in hell! But since thou hast spared us, oh, let us now make haste to seek and to obtain thy offered mercy! Take away from us all hardness of heart, all our

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enmity against thee, and all envy, malice and uncharitableness towards men. Unite us, by a living faith, to Jesus our Saviour. Write upon our hearts the law of love, that we may seek thy face with joy, and delight to do thy holy will, and be continually given to works of kindness and pity. And grant, that having faithfully served thee in thy church here below, we may dwell before thee for ever in thy church above, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

V.

THE CURSE AND THE PROMISE. (*Continued.*)

GENESIS iii. 14—24. (See page 13.)

THE Bible is full of histories, showing how Satan tries to enslave and ruin every man living. But Christ is able to overcome him: and he certainly will overcome at the last. Perhaps you would like I should point to you some of the ways in which Satan has tried for the mastery, and how God overcame him.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was a cruel oppressor of the Children of Israel. Satan had possession of his heart. He even went so far, as to command that all the male children of the Israelites should be thrown into the river, and drowned. This was, indeed, like a true child of the devil. But God visited the land with dreadful plagues, to punish him and his people. And on the night of the Passover (which we will read about another time) the

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angel of the Lord went forth, and destroyed all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both of man and beast. Thus God delivered the Children of Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh.—But what was, perhaps, still more remarkable; when the Egyptians were pushed on by Satan once more, the Lord suffered them to follow his people into the Red Sea; and there he swallowed up Pharaoh, and all his army, in the depths of the sea. Then the Israelites sang a song of triumph; which, it is said, will be sung also in heaven. For, as the Lord conquered Pharaoh and all his army, so will Christ conquer the devil and all his angels; and the redeemed of the Lord will then for ever sing the song of Moses the man of God, and the song of the Lamb.

When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took upon him the form of man, and dwelt on earth, the devil came to tempt him. But Christ overcame the temptations. Satan spoke in broken verses of Scripture, and with these he endeavoured to mislead Christ. But Jesus saw through his subtilty, and answered him with verses of Scripture whole and unbroken. (We must read about this some other day.) This shows the great advantage of knowing the Bible well; for with the help of the Bible we shall be able, as our Saviour did, to fight against Satan. And if we know the whole Bible well, we shall not be easily deceived by false teachers.

It was when the devil had entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot, that Judas went about to betray his Master, Jesus Christ. Satan would think he had

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thus a great victory over the Son of God: and yet it was by this very way that Jesus conquered Satan. For St. Paul says, that it was by death that Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.

As soon as there was a Church of Christ established in any place by the faithful preaching of the Gospel, Satan did all he could to overthrow it. For this purpose, from time to time, he stirred up many people to persecute; but they did not prevail. Christ gave his disciples grace to endure all things for the sake of the Gospel. See how he speaks to the persecuted Church of Smyrna: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

But there is another warfare between Christ and Satan; which all feel in their hearts, when they try to serve God in earnest. Christ says, "Love the ways of Religion." Satan whispers to us, "Religion is a very melancholy thing." Christ says, "Keep my sayings in your heart:" but the devil comes, and tries to snatch them away. Christ teaches us how to pray; but Satan wishes to hinder us from prayer. Now, which of these two shall prevail in your heart—Christ, or the devil?

If you will choose Christ, you will find him the best Master. Perhaps you say, "But Satan is so

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busy about my heart: he is too hard, and too cunning for me. When I wish to be religious, he turns all my thoughts the wrong way, after something else. When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I wish to fly from bad company, they follow after me, and laugh at me. When I am beginning to think of good thoughts, just then bad thoughts come into my mind. What am I to do? How can I conquer this enemy, who is so cunning, and so hard upon me?"

My friend, the answer is very plain. "Ask Christ to be your friend. Let him dwell in your heart by faith." Where Christ reigns, Satan may try to be master, but he never will. Open your heart to Christ in prayer. Tell him all your temptations. Beseech him to cast out Satan, and to take possession of your heart. Satan may bruise your heel; that is, he may torment and trouble your mind: but this is not so deadly as bruising the head. And this is the promise; "Christ will bruise the head of Satan." He will set his foot upon him, and crush him. This he will do, even in your heart, if only you continue praying in the name of Christ:

"For Satan trembles, when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast overcome death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; enable us, we beseech thee, faithfully to follow thee, and to fight manfully against the

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world, the flesh, and the devil. Be thou our hiding-place and refuge, in every time of trial and temptation. Suffer not the enemy to prevail, or do us harm. Deliver us from the curse, and the dominion of sin, that we may enjoy peace and safety through thee. Speak comfortably to our souls, whenever we mourn before thee with a godly sorrow for sin. Cleanse our consciences from dead works; and bestow on us the joys of thy salvation, to strengthen us for thy continual service. Guide us in the paths of holiness through this life; and finally, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us!

VI.

LABOUR AND SORROW, OUR PORTION HERE: COMFORT, ONLY IN CHRIST.

GENESIS iii. 16—19.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

WHEN Adam and Eve had sinned against God, the ground was cursed for their sake. The children of

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men are born into a world very different from the Paradise in which our first parents were placed. Pain, and death, were not known there: but when sin entered into the world, the curse immediately followed.

Concerning death, we will speak another time. What we have now to do with, is, the misery of man in this world, and the cure of it.

David says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is the consequence of Adam's sin. Therefore, at the time of our birth, we enter the world with cries and tears; and the portion of man, in this earth, is, as Job says, to be of few days, and full of trouble. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

The earth, you know, brings forth plenty of weeds and thistles, briers and thorns: but to make the earth fit for sowing corn, men must plough and harrow, sow and reap; they must bear the hardships of winter, and the heat of summer; and thus, by the sweat of their face, they at length eat bread.

You know, too, that, in great towns and cities, man's lot is to labour. They "rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness;" and some get very little sleep.

The poor often think this very hard. Still we may be very sure of one thing; namely, that riches cannot of themselves make a man happy. They afford happiness only when used for God's glory. Perhaps you see a rich man well fed, finely dressed,

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and riding in a carriage; and you think, because he sits at his ease, and because he does not work with his hands, therefore he is happy. But this is a great mistake. No man can escape the general curse. The rich have many troubles; and those of them that are not pious, are often more tired with not knowing what to do, than the poor are with having too much to do.

Remember that simple prayer, which Jesus Christ has taught us: "Give us this day our daily bread." The Lord hears the young ravens that call upon him; and will he not feed his own children that pray to him?

Contentment is learned only in the school of Christ; for there we learn, that we always suffer less than our sins deserve. And in our Master, Christ Jesus, we have such a picture of one suffering for our sins, as should make us ashamed, whenever we, sinful creatures, murmur.

Men who live without God are always seeking for ease in this world, yet cannot find it. The better way is, to labour on, with our hands or our head, or both, to the last. It is better to wear out, than to rust out. Idleness is misery: honest labour is the best for man.

When sickness or grievous calamities come, we should say, "This is from the hand of the Lord. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Every true believer in Christ has a source of solid comfort, which the rest of the world know

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not of. He knows that his sins are forgiven him, through faith in Christ. Believing his soul to be safe for eternity, he knows he need not fear what his body may suffer in this world. The great question is, "Have *you* chosen the Lord for your portion?" Do you rest in Christ as *your* Saviour? Do you lament your sins more than your afflictions? Do you find your burdens made lighter by prayer? Does prayer lead you to praise? Do you rejoice in the hope of heaven, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest"? Oh, if you knew Christ, and if you really lived on him by faith, no sorrows of this life would ever overwhelm you! You would find that "all things work together for good to them that love God." You would always look upon Christ as a fellow-sufferer. You would read the Gospels with new delight; for there you see how Jesus, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

But do not think that your present sufferings can purchase heaven. We can of ourselves deserve nothing but eternal punishment. The impenitent and unbelieving weep, both in this world and in the next. Seek, then, for salvation by Christ, as a free gift;—and having this, you have all.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou righteous Judge of all the earth; what miseries hast thou laid upon the children of men, on account of our many transgressions against

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thee! We have sinned, and done wickedly; and thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel! But as thy holiness is, so is thy mercy also towards us, miserable sinners. Thou speakest to us, as of old: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." Yea, thou hast laid help upon One that is mighty; even on Jesus, our crucified Redeemer, who "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto thee, through him."

Oh, suffer us not to perish through our own obstinacy, or unbelief! Incline our hearts to look to Jesus. Let us never fall into despair, when we behold so dear a ransom paid for our souls, even the precious blood of Jesus. Let us not, O Lord, sink under the load of our sins! but enable us to cast the heavy burden on Him, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Take out from our consciences the sting, and tormenting power of sin, through the grace of Him, who was bruised that we might be healed, and who died that we might live, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

VII.

DEATH, THE END OF ALL BELOW: LIFE ETERNAL, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

GENESIS iii. 19.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Two things there are, to most men melancholy to think of. The one is, death: the other is, the fear

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of death. Yet, if we are true Christians, we shall be willing to think of them both; and, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, this mournful subject will be changed into a delightful one. Through him the sting of death is quite taken away, and we may obtain victory over our last enemy.

See how the curse pronounced on Adam has been fulfilled, and is fulfilling, on all the generations of men! The words of St. Paul describe it, when he says, "Death reigned." Death, like an irresistible king, reigns over us all. He holds in his hand an iron sceptre; and when he smites, none can escape. Alike the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong, infants and the grey-headed, are every moment dropping into the grave. Every man born into the world must say, with Job, "I know that thou wilt bring me unto death, and to the house appointed for all living."

Nor is it only death that is mournful, but all the way that leads to it. When we are in health and spirits, we think too little of this. But we should reflect on this curse, in all the sicknesses which mankind suffer. Think of the diseases and pains, the sighs, tears and groans, which keep men company on their road to the grave. Truly, man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity! In the midst of life, we are in death. As was said before, the healthy and the gay try *not* to think of these things; and they are offended if you speak to them about dying. They do not like to think that *their*

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turn may come very quickly. How true is that saying, "The reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner is burying his friend!" Wise men will lay this to heart; and they will say, "Depart from me, ye sinful pleasures; and let me prepare for death and eternity!"

Would you know, What is it that makes death terrible? St. Paul will answer the question. He says, "The sting of death is sin." It was sin that brought death into the world; and it is the remembrance of our sins that makes it terrible to think of dying. Oh, if we could cast off this burden of sin —could we only be assured that God is our friend, and heaven our portion after death—who then would fear to die? Instead of cleaving to the world, we should even desire to depart, "and to be with Christ, which is far better." Oh, then, seek to win Christ, and to be found in him! Through faith in his precious blood, be reconciled to God. Mortify all worldly lusts, and live as one that loves the appearing of our Lord Jesus. Then, to *you*, death will no longer be a king of terrors, but a messenger of peace.

When Jesus descended into the grave, he made the dark way safe, for all that believe in Him. After three days, he burst the tomb, rose from the dead; and, after forty days, ascended into heaven. In like manner, at the great Judgment Day, he will call the dead, small and great, to come and stand before him. Those who are living on the earth, at that day, shall be caught up in the air. And they

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"that are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Those who, on earth, did not believe in Christ, nor serve him, will then be utterly consumed with terrors: they will be driven into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, for ever. "This is the second death!" This ought to make every sinner tremble. O sinner! take no rest, no sleep—enjoy no pleasure, no company, till you have prayed earnestly to Jesus, to deliver you from the wrath to come! For your life's sake, repent, believe, and turn to God. Pray for his Holy Spirit to change your heart. O sinner! with such an evil heart as thine, thou *canst not* enter into the kingdom of heaven. Pray that it may be made a new heart. No longer remain dead in trespasses and sins, lest the hour of death should find you unprepared. But cry mightily to God; and remember, that "*now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation."

But, perhaps, you have begun to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and you desire to live and die in his service. If so, let Him be your hope, your joy, your rest. Let not Satan trouble you with the fear of dying. Sometimes you may be low-spirited, and ready to sink. At such moments, let this short sentence comfort your heart, "FOR ME CHRIST DIED!"—And when, at last, we come to die, may some kind Christian friend be near at hand, to whisper in our ears these blessed words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

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Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

PRAYER.

Lord, what is man? At his best estate, he is altogether vanity. Thou turnest man to destruction: war, and pestilence, and famine, and disease, and accident, are thy ministers of death. We spend our years like a tale that is told: we are as a sleep: our strength and our feebleness are both alike to thee, O thou Almighty and Eternal God! who for our sins art justly displeased.

But our hope is in Thee, O Lord, and in that covenant of mercy, which thou hast made for a thousand generations. Thou art the dwelling-place and refuge of thy people. Our times are in thy hand; and precious in thy sight is the death of thy saints. Deal gently, gracious Father! with our frail bodies, and our fainting spirits. When we draw nigh unto death, O bear us up with thine everlasting arms! let not the enemy prevail against us. And when our spirit shall be called to return to thee, may we sweetly sleep in Jesus, in the blessed hope of beholding thee face to face, and awaking up after thy likeness.

Prepare, O Lord, the dying for death! May they seek and obtain peace in Jesus, now in an acceptable time, in this their short day of salvation.

We ask these mercies, and we commend our spirits into thy hands, through our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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VIII.

THE FIERY SERPENTS.

NUMBERS xxi. 5—9.

And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people; and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

THIS would be a very instructive story, if considered only by itself; but our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us, that it is also a lively picture of the danger of sin, and of the sufficiency of that salvation which he purchased for us, when he died upon the cross.

The bite of sin is more dreadful than the bite of fiery serpents; for it poisons the soul. All mankind have suffered from it. It is the bite of that old serpent, the devil. See how fiercely it inflames the soul with raging lusts, which hurry men on into perdition! Some men, even in this life, seem to be almost in hell—swearing, fighting, lying, drink-

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ing, gambling, stealing; running into all sorts of riot and excess; speaking against God; vexing the hearts of the godly; jesting about the devil; and madly sporting on the very brink of hell! These are of their father the devil; they do the works of their father; and, except they repent, they will, in the end, have their portion with the devil and his angels, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

But there are sinners of another kind—sinners who outwardly appear decent to men, but whose hearts are full of evil in the sight of God. Solomon speaks of such, when he says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Such sort of persons are, the proud; the covetous; those who attend public worship only from custom; those who go about to establish their own righteousness, thinking they want no better; and will not accept that perfect righteousness, the righteousness which is of God by faith. In these persons, sin is working like as low poison. It does not show itself, so as to alarm: still, they are most surely dying, from the venomous sting of sin.

Every thing that falls short of perfect love to God, and perfect love to man, is sin: so, then, all are sinners, and all have come short of the glory of God.

But the cure for sin is very simple: it is, faith in Christ. Jesus himself explained this to Nicodemus, when he said, "And, as Moses lifted up the serpent

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in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." . . .

Who would have thought that a brazen serpent, set up on a pole, could do any good to those bitten with the fiery serpents? Some would have said, "Put a plaister upon the wound." Others might have said, "Tell those who are bitten, to keep moving about, and so shake off the disease." But God had appointed another way—only one way. And they who looked at the brazen serpent were healed, because they believed His word.

So should we point dying sinners to Christ crucified. It is in vain to tell them, "Try to do your best;" for men cannot save themselves. We must say to sinners, as Christ did, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Give me leave to ask, Have you felt the misery of your sins? Are you looking for cure to the Lord Jesus Christ alone? When you hear of His saving name, is faith immediately at work? Do love and joy spring up in your heart, so that you are ready to sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be praise and dominion for ever!"?

Are you one of those persons, who think that sin is not so deadly in you, as in some of your neighbours; that you have done nobody any harm; that you need the Saviour only a little; and that, after

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all, you have a good heart? Alas! I must tell you that you are greatly deceived. If you knew the real case, you would find that your heart is the worst thing about you. Thousands of evil thoughts have lodged in it. It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It needs to be wholly changed. You ought to pray, without ceasing—"Pardon all my sins in heart and life; and create in me a clean heart, O God, for Christ's sake!"

There are some ready to say, "Tell me no more of Christ: I am so far gone in sin, that I cannot repent: let me die as I am!"—But I answer, "Why will you die?" Think of that one word, "Why?" Think of it day and night. Why will you not live? Why will you not believe? Why will you not cast one more look toward Christ? Why will you not pray for faith? Think of a man dying in agonies, from the bite of a serpent: yet, just at the point of death, he had only to look at the brazen serpent, and he lived. So, if you would only look to Christ with faith, you would have pardon for all the past; you would pass from death unto life; and be made at once a new creature in Christ Jesus. Why, then, will you die, with such a Saviour set before your eyes?

PRAYER.

O Lord, who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin? Thou retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy. O turn again, and have compassion upon

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us! Subdue our iniquities: cast all our sins behind thy back. Quicken us, by thy good Spirit, in our approaches to thee, that we may come in an acceptable time. To-day, while it is called to-day, let us make haste to seek thee; lest our hearts should become hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin.

Turn thou us, good Lord! and so we shall be turned. Draw us, and we will run after thee. Heal our souls, for we have sinned against thee. Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, and love us freely, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord!

IX.

THE CURE OF INTEMPERANCE.

PROVERBS xxiii. 29—35.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick: they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord? May not a drunkard be saved, and brought to a holy life?

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With men, this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

The outward descriptions of drunkenness are well enough known in gin-shops. You look at them without horror, because you are used to them. The worst is the last verse: "I will seek it yet again:"—which arises from these four things:

First, Your taste is spoiled.

Secondly, Your understanding is weakened.

Thirdly, Company besets you.

Fourthly, Your heart towards God is hardened. With which of these shall I begin?—I will begin with the last.

1. Your heart toward God is hardened. For although sometimes, when you think of God, you are ready to cry; it is not because your heart is softened, but because you are frightened; or, because drinking has made your nerves weak.—You are in a pitiable state. You do not know Jesus as a Saviour and Friend, who can recover you from your sins in this world, and save you from punishment in the world to come. You therefore do not come to him, that you may have life. You do not entreat him to help you. Sometimes, perhaps, you even hate God: you wish that he had not made you: you are ready to curse him, because he did not take you out of the world, before the sin and misery of drunkenness had overcome you. If this be the state of your mind, yet, I beseech you, do not let sin and Satan frighten you away from God.

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This is not the right way to think of God. While there is life, there is hope: you should account that the long-suffering of God is salvation. Has he spared you for nothing? Did he not send his own dear Son to bring you near to him? and did not Jesus shed his precious blood, that he might save to the uttermost? But now you see how intemperance keeps you far from him. As long as you are intemperate, you do not take the first step: you do not cry for help: you do not pray in faith. Your heart turns from God, though he is ready to receive you. Satan, the enemy of God, and your enemy, rejoices thus to keep you from him. Satan would not have you look to the Saviour. It is Satan that says, "Go on drinking again and again, till you are merry or stupid:" any thing to keep you from Jesus Christ, and his salvation.

This, then, is the worst of drinking: it keeps your heart from God. And when you seem to have come a little way towards Christ the Saviour, sin and Satan hurry you back again. Sin is a down-hill road;—but do not despair: Jesus will recover you, if you hold out your hand to him.

2. Next, think how company besets you.—They tell you, and you tell them, that you must drink, for the sake of good fellowship. So the drinking man ruins himself to please others; and others ruin themselves to please him. While drinking, they forget that hell is gaping, to receive them all. There impenitent drunkards will weep and howl for ever. Here, on earth, they club together in drinking,

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swearing, and laughing;—especially, they laugh at hell. But in hell they never will laugh: they will only swear, while they have not so much as a drop of cold water to cool their tongue.

You must give up drinking company, if you mean to give up drinking. Pray for grace, not to mind their laughing at you. Pray for grace, not to mind their tempting you back. If they tell you that you are a pitiful sneaking fellow, and that you have no spirit, boldly tell them, that you hope Jesus, the Saviour, will make you another kind of man. Then, if they begin to curse the name of Jesus, leave them immediately, and have no more to do with them. But still, in your heart pray to Jesus;—pray for them: and pray for yourself; for you are not safe by yourself, without him.

3. And then, see how drinking destroys the understanding! When people drink, they lose their memories. They blunder, and do not know what they are about. Almost any body can cheat them. Especially, they cannot understand the Bible: they cannot remember it.—But now let me tell you one short text, which I beg you to remember: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And remember, too, that Christ saves us *from* our sins; but not *in* our sins.

4. If, as is frequently the case, your body is very much wasted and diseased by drinking, ask where to find a pious doctor: he will tell you what to do. And humble yourself under the hand of the most mighty and most merciful God.

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Thus I have shown you that drinking hinders your soul from coming to God. It throws you into all sorts of bad company. It ruins the understanding; and it ruins the health. If you do not take the right way to be cured, you will go on longing for drink more and more, till it ruins you for ever. The Bible tells us all this very plainly: it describes the very words that drunkards use: "Come ye, say they, we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Still, there is salvation offered to you. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? With man, this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Jesus the Saviour reigns; and around his throne in heaven there are some now singing his praises, who once on earth had been for a time drunkards: but, by his grace, they repented, and sought a new heart, in an acceptable time. Stop now—stop, ere you be ruined—stop at once! Now, now, now is *your* accepted time; now is *your* day of salvation! Come then, immediately come to Christ!

PRAYER.

O thou God of infinite mercy, look down with pity on all the sons and daughters of intemperance, who lie wallowing in their brutish sins, and seem to be given up to work all uncleanness with greediness! Thou, O God, canst do every thing; have compassion upon them, and help and save them. Vain is the help of man! Thy grace alone can

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redeem them from sin and death. And hast thou not magnified thy name in former times, by bringing many, that once were drunkards, to sit at the feet of Jesus, sober, and in their right mind? Hast thou not pardoned them, through the blood of Jesus; and sanctified them through his Spirit? Are there not some now in heaven, who once on earth had been drnnkards, but were saved, ere it was too late, and plucked as brands out of the burning?

Lord! we would plead with thee on behalf of those who are so mad after their lusts, that they do not pray for themselves. Give them not over to the dominion and curse of their violent passions. Soften their hearts betimes. Let them not die the death of drunken Nabal, whose heart became within him like a stone. Take away the heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh. Enable them to lift up the voice of prayer, for their own salvation. Strengthen them, to resist temptation, to deny the cravings of the flesh, and to fly from enticing company. Cast out the foul and fierce spirit of intemperance from their hearts, and bid it enter no more into them.

O purify the souls of sinners, and fill them with thy Holy Spirit! Let the joys of thy salvation, and the praises of the Redeemer, be sweeter to them than all the mirth they ever knew in the days of sin and folly. And thus, O Lord, grant to us purity and peace throughout our land, amid our families, and in our hearts; so that we may be fitted for the enjoyment of thy kingdom above; into

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which nothing shall enter that defileth; but where there are streams of living water, to refresh thy saints with pleasures that are everlasting.

We ask these great mercies, even for the chief of sinners, through Him that loved us, and gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

X.

WANDERING SINNERS SOUGHT OUT, AND SAVED BY CHRIST.

ISAIAH liii. 3—6.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

THESE words describe the lost state of men by sin; and the pity of Jesus Christ, that Good Shepherd of the sheep, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and who even laid down his life for the sheep.

Nothing can more truly picture our state, than this word, "We are wanderers." We all wander from the fold: we are like lost sheep, which break through the fence, and then go carelessly grazing

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through the fields and lanes, the valleys and the mountains; till at length the wolf catches them; or they fall into some pit; or the stormy night comes on, and they have no shelter. Neither have they the least thought how they came to wander, or how far they have wandered, or which is the way back. In this miserable state they perish, unless the shepherd follows after them, and catches them with his crook, and leads them back to the fold; weary, ragged, frightened, and half dead, as they are.

This is the picture of sinners; that is, of all men. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." Have we not all departed from God, and forgotten our resting-place? Have we not all set out to follow the ways of the world, and to keep company with sinners, and to taste of these pastures, instead of keeping within the good pastures of God's commandments and promises? We shall understand this better, if we notice another part of this picture; for it is said also, "We have turned every one to his own way."

So it is with sinners: though all are alike in wandering from God, all are not exactly alike in their particular sins. Some follow one kind, some another: although most men practise many kinds of sin; for sins seldom go alone. Thus, some give themselves up to the lusts of the flesh: the adulterer, the fornicator, the unclean, the drunkard, the glutton, the sluggard, these are all lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God; and they turn "every one to his own way." Others give them-

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selves up to the lusts of the spirit—to pride and malice, and hatred, and envy; to money-getting, and covetousness, and selfishness; or to discontentedness, and hatred of religion, and blasphemy: these also turn "every one to his own way." But, generally, several of these sins go together. Besides, some sins are practised in the life, while others are indulged in the heart; so that men are altogether sinful; "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good; no, not one."

Think, then, what an immense multitude of sins have been committed in the world, since the first sin of Adam in Paradise! How has God been dishonoured! and how is he provoked every day! Our sins of thought, word, and deed, have reached unto heaven—the sins of millions of men, women, and children; all born in sin, all living some time in sin, and multitudes of them dying in their sins!

But I entreat you to think chiefly of your own sins; for "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Think, which way *you* have wandered. Many, many ways, no doubt, have *you* sinned. I do not wish you to confess your sins to me; but, to God. Indeed, some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment. They have the mark of punishment in their bodies, and in their tempers, even in this life: you and I have seen many such characters. And think, whether sin has not left some mark of pain and sorrow upon *you*, such as makes you tremble to think what you

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will come to at the last. Have you not felt miserable, lost, frightened, like the wandering sheep? Are not *you* within reach of the howling wolf, and the roaring lion; that is, the devil, who goeth about, seeking whom he may devour? If you have fears, as well you may, on account of your sins, then I rejoice at being able to speak to you of Jesus, that Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep.

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." When Jesus dwelt on earth, his errand was, to seek and to save them that are lost. Always full of pity, full of care, his very looks showed how tenderly he felt for perishing sinners. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Little did his enemies, who crucified him, think that they were crucifying the Lord of glory. Little did they reflect, that he was at that time bearing the sins of the whole world. But think, O sinner! did he not at that moment bear *thy* sins? Look not at others; but, look at thyself, and still look to Jesus. Let us look, till we mourn for sin, and hate it, and make war against it. Let us look, till the love of this, our dying Redeemer, draws our hearts to love him, and trust him with our burdened, perishing souls. Jesus is our only refuge; and this one promise is enough to comfort us, when sin lies heavy on our heart: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are *healed*."

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But who can give us this brokenness of heart for sin, and this faith in the love of our Saviour? Jesus, who shed his blood for our sins, he alone can give us this mourning, this believing heart. And he has promised to pour out the spirit of grace and of supplication; to lead us to look on Him whom our sins have pierced; and fill our hearts with mourning, and bitterness, for our iniquities. I entreat you, then—yea, I would constrain you—to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Fix your eyes on Him; and neverl ook off again. Though your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head, He is ready to pardon them all. Only let your prayer be, "God be merciful to me a sinner! Pardon all that is past! Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!" Be sure that Jesus will never cast out this prayer.

PRAYER.

Blessed Jesus, our Lord and our God—our Life, our Hope, our Glory! O fix our hearts on thee, and make them wholly thine! Thou didst pity us, while sinners: thou didst seek us, when wanderers: and thou didst lay down thy life for our sake. God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And, now, what shall we render unto the Lord, for this his unspeakable gift? Lord, we can only offer the sacrifice of a broken heart, which, thou hast said, thou wilt not despise. We present ourselves

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unto thee, to be made willing and obedient—an habitation of God, through the Spirit. O, accept us, Heavenly Father, in Christ, thy well-beloved Son! And let the same mind be in us which was also in Him. Fill us with meekness, humility, and love. Incline us to pity all wanderers from thy fold, even all our dying fellow-sinners upon earth. Teach us to seek them out, and bring them, by all means, to thee, O gracious Father! that they may be saved.

And, whensoever we are tempted aside into forbidden pastures, O speedily cause us to hear and know the voice of Jesus; and incline our hearts to return again to this good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus, our Lord and our Redeemer!

XI.

INVITATION TO SINNERS.

ISAIAH lv. 6—9.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

ALL the works of God are great, and far beyond man's understanding. His creation is glorious: his providence is wonderful. All "his thoughts are

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higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways."

But the greatest of all his works, is the work of Redemption.

The hardest of all things is, to reconcile enemies. When men hate one another, we know how bitter they are—how they quarrel, and hate—how they fight, and are ready to murder one another, if they dared. And even if they are forced to keep the peace, yet their hearts secretly burn with cruel hatred. Which of us knows how to forgive an enemy? Who takes pains to reconcile him? Which of us would lay down his life for him; or even for a friend? But "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

And, oh! what bitter pains did Jesus endure, that he might reconcile us unto God? Remember how he left the bosom of his Father; how he dwelt on earth, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith he was afflicted in the day of God's fierce anger? Think how the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and how he bore our sins, in his own body upon the tree! Was ever pity and love like this? It is higher than the heavens, and far above all our poor thoughts!

None can tell the greatness of his converting grace, but those who are converted. When the heart of a sinner is changed by God's Holy Spirit,

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he is filled with such a sense of the power and mercy of God, that he can only cry out with St. John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

What makes it so wonderful, is, that we have only to come and take these blessings:—they are given freely. Those who have no money, are invited, in the Gospel, to come, buy, and eat. "Yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

Let me then ask, Is there any proof, in your heart and life, that you have chosen Christ for your Master? Have you forsaken all known sin? and do you desire to be free from all sinful thoughts, and to serve the Lord fully? If not, why do you not accept this gracious offer? Why will you not turn from sin to the Saviour?

It is the voice of Jesus that invites, saying, "Come unto me." Say not, that you are afraid of coming to Christ, because your sins are very many, and very vile. On the contrary, the worse you are, the more eagerly you ought to come to him; for the promise is, "He will abundantly pardon." There is nothing too bad to be pardoned, if only we repent, and believe in Jesus. "Where sin hath abounded, there shall grace much more abound."

But, come to Him without delay. Come, hating and forsaking the sins, which have kept you from Him so long. If you waste the present moment, you may not have another. If you refuse this

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invitation, your heart may grow harder in sin. Begin now to pray and seek the Lord. He now is near to you, and may be found of you. If you should die in your sins, you will be banished from His presence for ever. You will find no mercy in that place, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. But you are now on praying ground. Come then, immediately, to Jesus, casting the burden of your sins on Him, and seeking grace to amend your life according to His holy word. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

PRAYER.

O, our God, we have indeed cause to bless thee, that thy thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways thy ways! Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is thy mercy toward them that fear thee. As far as the east is from the west, so far canst thou remove our transgressions from us. Thou, O Lord, art good, and doest good. Thou hast remembered us in our low estate; and thy mercy endureth for ever.

Deliver us, O our Heavenly Father, from the power and dominion of sin; and bestow on us the spirit of adoption, that we may be enabled to enter into thy presence, as loving children, brought nigh unto thee by the blood of Jesus! Let our prayer come up before thee, now, in an acceptable time.

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Now, while mercy may be had, we cry for mercy. O, cast not out our prayer! Let no love of sin remain in us, to hinder our enjoying the assurance of thy favour towards us. Grant to us, O Lord, pardon and peace, and the gracious witness of thy Spirit within us; witnessing with our spirits, that we are thy children, accepted in thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour!

XII.

CHRIST INVITING THE WEARY.

MATTHEW xi. 28—30.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

THIS is a general invitation, made by Jesus Christ to all sinners. He offers them the blessings of the Gospel of Peace.

None but Jesus could have invited them. None but Jesus has power to give pardon and peace. The ministers of the Gospel cannot say, Come to us; but they are bid to speak in His name. We invite you, saying, "Come unto Christ."

Who is this Saviour that invites? He is the Son of God. He was in the beginning with God, and He is God. But he took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh; and being himself without sin, he died for us sinners, that he might bring us unto

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God. His name was Emmanuel, 'God with us.' And he now sends his ministers with this message, "We pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled unto God."

While he was on earth, he continually went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases, and preaching the Gospel. We cannot, like him, heal diseases. But it is a delightful work, still to say to weary and sinful souls, "Come unto Christ." Though he is in heaven unseen by us, he is still mighty to save. He hears and answers every prayer, every sigh. He sits at the right hand of his Father, and there pleads for praying sinners, being the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. And we are assured that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

But who are the weary and heavy-laden? This means, all the sick and afflicted; all the children of men, that groan and weep under the burdens of life; provided only that their troubles lead them to mourn for their sins, and come to Christ.

All things are full of labour, and the misery of man is great upon him. When we are young and healthy and gay, we feel this too little; we abuse the gifts of God; and often we sin against him with a high hand. But sooner or later sorrow comes upon us. We ought to have repented of our sins before; but in the day of calamity it is not too late. Even then Christ says, "Come unto me."

Some also are brought to grieve for their sins, without much outward sorrow. The Spirit of God

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works inwardly upon them; and, by careful self-examination, they find that they are altogether sinful. The remembrance of sin takes such hold of them, that they are not able to look up. Conscience flashes in their face. Sins committed in youth or in riper years, sins of the heart as well as of the life, are set in order before them; and they can have no peace, till they have fled to Jesus, to deliver them from the wrath to come.

Jesus promises, "I will give you rest." When he pardons the sinner, he cleanses and quiets his conscience. And there is no other way of having a quiet conscience. But he who believes in Christ, though he was before laden with sins and full of fears, may now walk upright, and go on his way rejoicing. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Jesus also bids us take his yoke upon us. Pardoned sinners should walk humbly and holily, to the end of their days. There is no comfort without holiness; and "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." The closer we fit on this yoke, and the longer we wear it, the easier and lighter it will be. It is only when we wish to throw it off, or to slacken it, that this yoke galls our neck.

Satan is a hard master: sin is a bitter service; and "the wages of sin is death." Jesus is the kind Master: his service is perfect freedom; and "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Come, then, to Jesus!

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PRAYER.

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, who hast so loved the world as to give thine only begotten Son to die for us; open our eyes to behold the grace revealed to us in the person of this Divine Redeemer! Cause us to feel our own guilt and helplessness; and whenever any sorrow is sent to us, let it bring our sins to our remembrance, that we may turn our weary souls to Christ, and seek pardon, and peace, and rest in Him.

O Lord! other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: we have served divers lusts and pleasures; and we can have no other fruit from them, in the end, but shame, and grief, and fear. O help us now to take upon us the yoke of Jesus, which is easy; and his burden, which is light! Teach us to walk humbly with thee: let us not covet the praise of men, nor rest in the delights of this world; but let thy peace, O God! rule in our hearts; and let our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We ask these things in the name of Him, who loved us, and gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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XIII.

LOVE, FAITH, AND HUMILITY.

MATTHEW xv. 21—28.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me!

But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman! great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

We have here the clearest proof, how well pleased Jesus is with love, faith, and humility. This poor woman gained all that she asked from the Saviour; and He, at the same time, commends her graces, especially her faith in him.

Her love was manifested in bringing the case of her daughter before Christ. No doubt she cared for the soul, as well as for the body, of her daughter. She prays that Christ would deliver her from the

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power of the devil. Satan was permitted to torment her body by some grievous disease; and through this disease he would tempt and vex her soul.

When our bodies are afflicted, our souls are often disordered with fretful and impatient thoughts. We may pray to God to give us health; and if He pleases, he can and will do so. But what we should chiefly pray, is, that Satan may get no advantage over us. We should also be very gentle towards those that are distracted, or in great pain. We should pray of God, that he would save their souls, and keep them peaceful. Especially if persons in our own family be any way afflicted, we should earnestly pray for them, to Jesus, our compassionate Saviour. This praying for others is called intercessory prayer—making intercession for them.

Christ, at first, seemed not to hear her; and the disciples foolishly thought that he did not like to be troubled. Most likely the disciples had already tried to keep her back; but she did not mind them. They therefore came to Jesus, and desire him to "send her away." Was ever such a strange request made to him before?—to send away a praying soul! Had these disciples never heard him say, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden"? How long will it be, before they understand their Master? He loves to hear us crying after him! Let no one hinder the afflicted in their prayers, but rather help them forward to Christ.

The afflicted mother understood Christ better than his disciples did. She does not take his silence

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for neglect, but rather as an encouragement to persevere in prayer. And when Christ mentions his being sent chiefly to the Jews, she entreats him to extend his mercy a little further, to a weeping and worshipping Gentile. "Lord, help me!"

She had at the beginning addressed him, "O Lord, thou son of David!" which showed that she knew who, and what, he was—Emmanuel, 'God with us.' Now she adores him. Her faith was clear and strong.—When we come to Christ, we should remember that He is the Almighty God—that He is able to save to the uttermost—that all power is given unto Him, in heaven and in earth.

The Saviour next appears to change his silence for roughness. The Jews were accustomed to call people of other nations, dogs. Jesus condescends to use this low word, in order once more to try her faith and humility. He wishes us to trust his kindness, even when every thing around seems the opposite of kindness.

The woman's humility was equal to her faith. If she may not have bread, she will beg for crumbs. Lowly-minded believers know that the smallest favour from Christ is more than they deserve: they are thankful for the least kindness.

Now, Jesus can refuse no longer. As faith honours Christ, so will Christ honour faith. This afflicted mother, so wise in her humility, and so strong in her faith, gains all that she asked for.—A crumb of real grace is food sufficient to save the soul from perishing. But they who continue instant in prayer

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shall have abundance of that bread which endureth unto everlasting life.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, merciful and gracious, bow down thine ear, and hear us! Cast not out our prayer, and take not away thy mercy from us! On Thee, O Lord, would we wait continually, until thou have mercy upon us. Be not silent to us; lest, if thou make as though thou hearest not, we become like them that go down into the pit, and all our hopes perish. Though thou tarry long, we will wait for thee; and not let thee go, except thou bless us.

We are not worthy, O Lord, of the least of all thy mercies: we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs that fall from thy table. Who are we, that we should ever complain of thee, as dealing hardly by us? Thou hast borne with us; thou hast waited for us; and Jesus hath bled on the cross for our sins. O Thou, that hast not spared thine own Son, but hast freely given Him up for us all, how wilt thou not, with Him, also freely give us all things? In Jesus, we trust we shall obtain far more than we are able to conceive, and far better than we deserve.

Pity, O Lord, all the sons and daughters of affliction! Thou that carest for the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, teach us also to care for them. Raise up them that are bowed down: comfort all that mourn in Zion. Lift up upon us the light of Thy countenance; and lead us into the way of perfect peace, through Christ our Lord!

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XIV.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

LUKE vii. 40—50.

And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

A PHARISEE, named Simon, had invited Jesus to eat with him. Jesus did not refuse; though his heart was not set on visiting and feasting. He never ceased from his delightful work of showing mercy and pity.

A poor miserable soul, a wanderer in the ways of sin, a woman lost in character, had been in the

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crowd, following him. From what she heard him preach, she felt that he was just the Friend she needed. She was fully persuaded that he was willing to save her: for it was at that very moment that Jesus had said, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden; and I will give you rest." She therefore ventured into the Pharisee's house, to be near Christ.

She came behind him as he sat at meat, "and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

The Pharisee, who saw what kind of woman she had been, but did not know of her change of heart, was shocked; and he began to doubt whether Christ knew her character, and whether he was a prophet. "Simon spake within himself: This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner."

Christ will show the Pharisee that he is a prophet indeed; yea, a God, knowing the most secret thoughts. He therefore begins answering the Pharisee, by asking him a question.

He puts the case of a man, having two debtors; one owing him fifty, the other five hundred, pence; but, "forasmuch as they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Which of them, says Christ, will love him most?

Simon could not help answering, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." Jesus saith

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unto him, "Thou hast rightly judged." And now he begins to apply the two cases, to the self-righteous Pharisee, and to this weeping penitent.

Both of them had, in reality, innumerable sins to be forgiven. But the Pharisee did not feel this; and therefore thought his debt to mercy a very small one. The woman felt her sins almost too great to be forgiven; and therefore, when she found Christ ready to forgive every one of her sins, she she did not know how to express the abundance of her overflowing love to him.

The Pharisee had invited Christ, not from politeness, but from curiosity. He had showed him no marks of respect. He had given him no water for his feet, no ointment for his head. The woman had washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She had not ceased to kiss his feet, and had anointed them with ointment.

The Pharisee supposes that the touch of this woman will defile Christ. He did not know that Christ was without sin, "holy, harmless, separate from sinners." Her touch could do him no harm; while purifying grace flowed from his sacred body, which she touched in faith.

But what encouraged this sinful woman, so broken-hearted and penitent?—It was Hope, springing up. She had heard the Saviour assuring sinners, that there was mercy for them. If she had been without hope, she would have been hardened, not softened. The thought of all her sinfulness would have thrown her into despair; and she would have gone on sin-

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ning more and more. She would have said, "There is no hope; no: for I have loved pleasures, and after them will I go." But when she finds that she *may* be saved, she *wishes* to be saved. The grace of Christ wins the most desperate sinners, softens the hardest, and cleanses the vilest.

Jesus pronounces her pardon, to the amazement of all present. He ascribes her salvation to her faith—"Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

What an altered character would she now become! Her tears are followed by a quiet conscience. Her eyes no more wander. Her affections are no more disordered. They are calm, and holy; fixed on Christ, and his service. She no more increases the transgressors among men; but tells her former companions in sin, what a dear Saviour she has found.

Oh, the depth of the Saviour's love! Oh, may all his ministers and servants invite lost sinners, as He did! And let the loving-kindness of Jesus the Saviour be made known, in every city—in every street and alley—in every abode of sin, disease, and sorrow!

PRAYER.

O our God, how ought we to blush and be confounded, when we remember the vileness of our hearts, and the innumerable transgressions of our lives; all which thy pure and holy eyes have seen from the beginning! Well may we wonder that we have been so often spared; and that we were not

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long since shut up in hell, without any hope of thy pity.

But Thou hast set before us an open door of mercy, by which the vilest may enter, and come before thee, pleading the most precious blood-shedding of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ. Yea, thou hast prepared for us a spotless robe of righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe in Him. O grant to us, the most unworthy of thy creatures, faith in this Divine Redeemer, that by Him our souls may be washed, justified, and sanctified! Remember not against us the sins of our youth, or the transgressions of riper years; but, according to thy mercy, think thou upon us, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord!

O do thou break the cruel yoke of Satan; and by thy Spirit enable us to shake it off from us, that we may henceforth no more serve sin! Let every member of our body, and every affection of our soul, be sanctified; and may they all be made instruments of righteousness unto God! Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and let no corrupt or defiling thoughts lodge within us. Never suffer us to become a snare, or a stumbling-block, to others; but rather make us monuments of thy mercy, delighting to tell others how thou hast loved us, O thou that savest even the chief of sinners! And finally, O gracious Father! receive us as thy children, without spot, and blameless, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!

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XV.

THE PRODIGAL SON: HIS FOLLY.

LUKE xv. 11—16.

And he said, A certain man had two sons:

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

IN the first part of this story of the prodigal son, our Lord Jesus Christ describes the folly, and guilt, and misery, of sinners. They depart from the Living God; they abuse all his gifts; they sink deeper and deeper; and, unless his grace recovers them, they receive the wages of sin, which is death, from the hands of their cruel master, the devil.

Now, since all are sinners, it will be necessary to observe the different marks given in this parable, which point out to us our sinful ways and dispositions.

1. Selfishness is one of the first and plainest marks of sin. Indeed, though men do not suspect it, this sin lies at the root of all. Men wish to live for self, not for God. This young man had no other plan in his mind, than to get all he could,

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and spend it on himself. How little do unconverted men consider that Self is the idol set up in their hearts! Self-seeking, and self-pleasing, are the main business of their lives. Say now, does not conscience tell you that this has been the feeling of your heart? Even when your mind has been a little softened, yet selfishness is always ready to rise up again.

2. Another mark of the ungodly is—thorough dislike of Religion. You see that this young man grew weary of his father's house. He did not care for home. If he had broken the heart of his affectionate father, it would have given him no pain. In the same way, sinners turn their back upon God. When pious friends weep for them, they laugh at it. When God condescends to say that he is grieved for them, it gives them no concern: for, as they themselves have no pleasure in God, they do not care how much he may be displeased with them.

3. Self-will, or the spirit of independence, is another very broad mark upon sinners. This young man, no doubt, had often said, in his own mind, "It is high time for me to be my own master. I am quite old enough to set up for myself; why should I always be in leading-strings? Is my father always to be wiser than I? and am I never to think for myself?" In this manner we may suppose the young man talked the matter over, to himself, and some idle companions. Self-will lies at the root of sin. The sinner will not give up his opinion or his choice, although fathers command

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him, and mothers entreat him. He takes all that he can lay hold of; saying, "Give me what belongs to me, and let me do what I like with it."

4. Sinners also wish to drown the voice of conscience. This young man "went into a far country." He thought he would go completely ought of sight. In the same manner, sinners would be glad to avoid the eye of God, if possible. "Thou God seest me," is a terrible word to them, when their consciences are at all awake: but they generally endeavour to drown conscience.

5. Riotous living was now the business of this young man. He had plenty of gay companions, as long as his money lasted. As long as the sinner has health and strength, he naturally spends himself, as much as ever he can, on the world.

6. And now "there arose a mighty famine in that land;" and the young man, having spent all, began to be in want. He hired himself out to the meanest service, feeding swine; and would have been glad if he might have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. "But no man gave unto him." This describes the complete wretchedness that sinners are brought to, sooner or later. They are stripped of all joy. They have no one to comfort them. Their companions in sin, when there is nothing to eat and drink, are the first to turn their backs upon them. And Satan, who has been deceiving them all the time, is waiting the moment of their death, to plunge them into hell.

But there is still a voice of mercy for the poor

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prodigal, however sad his case. It is the voice of Jesus, who died to save him. Jesus comes with love and pity, to visit the wretched, the outcast, the diseased, the despairing, the famished, and the dying. Thousands of angels surround the sick-bed of the penitent, where Christ is preached. They watch to hear the worn-out sinner sigh a prayer, and cast a look of faith towards Jesus. Jesus is the friend of sinners, the Saviour of the lost. Oh, let us all lift up our hearts to Jesus!

PRAYER.

O adorable and ever-blessed Jesus, who didst come to seek and to save that which was lost! whither should the child of misery fly, but unto thee? O, how far, and how long, have we wandered! What bitter fruits of sin have we tasted; and what a cup of sorrow, and wrath, have we been filling up, by our iniquities!

Truly, we may say, we have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. We have walked after the imagination of our hearts, adding iniquity unto iniquity, increasing our guilt by obstinate rebellion: and now our sins have taken such hold of us, that we are scarce able to look up. We are ready to think our sins unpardonable and incurable. But, O suffer us not to fall into unbelief of thy mercy! We have nothing left us, but the hope of thy forgiveness, and of thy undeserved favour. And this thou delightest to bestow, on those who confess themselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

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blind, and naked. Such are we! Receive us, Heavenly Father, for thy dear Son's sake! We would believe his promises: help thou our unbelief! Hear us, in His name, who is able to save to the uttermost; even thy dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

XVI.

THE PRODIGAL SON: HIS REPENTANCE.

LUKE xv. 17—24.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise, and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

For this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

THIS account of the returning prodigal exactly describes the repenting sinner, when he comes back to God through Jesus Christ, and is received again

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into favour by his Heavenly Father. Every part of this account is worthy of our closest attention; for we are all wanderers from God.

1. First it is said, that this young man "came to himself." He came to his proper senses. He had been out of his right mind, so long as he gave himself up to riotous living. Sinners are never in their right mind, till they discover that sinful pleasure is bitterness, that the world is a cheat, and that their own hearts are full of madness against God. It is only fools, that make a mock at sin. And as soon as the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding, they are ready to cry out, "I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly." Now sin of every kind becomes a burden too heavy to be borne. Sins of the life; sins of the tongue; and especially sins of the heart, are now seen and felt to be most abominable.

2. Another mark of his repentance was, his beginning to think what a happy place home was. Awakened sinners cannot help thinking, "Oh, what blessedness there must be in Religion." And they think right. There is no happiness greater than peace with God, and the hope of dwelling with him for ever. Moreover, when we come to think aright, there is no misery so dreadful as that of living far from God, and that of being cast away from his presence, to dwell for ever with devils, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone!

3. The young prodigal comes to the resolution of confessing to his father, how shamefully he had

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acted. Some are too proud to confess. Through a false shame, they would rather die than acknowledge their sin. When they are sunk into the greatest misery, and all seems gone, yet pride is not gone. Bend they will not: they will rather break. But the true penitent has a generous shame. With an honest mind, he confesses, "My God is righteous, and I am wicked. Should He cast me immediately into hell, it is no worse than I deserve. But I remember hearing, that he is a merciful God, slow to anger, and ready to pardon. Let me try him. I will go and confess, how unworthy I am of the meanest place in his service. I will do any thing, and suffer any thing, rather than remain the slave of the devil."

4. And now the work of mercy begins in good earnest. The father sees him "afar off", and runs to meet him faster than the prodigal son went to seek his father. The mercy of God is swifter than our repentance. He is more ready to hear, than we to pray. Yet this we must observe, to the credit of the young man: he not only *said* that he would arise, and go to his father; but, he *did* so: he kept his word. It is a hopeless sign, when persons promise to mend, but put it off for the present, and go on with their former lusts and pleasures. Not so this young man: he immediately sought his way back to his father's house. And now, see the joy with which God welcomes a returning sinner! He sees him while he is yet at a great distance. He sees the first turn of the sinner's heart, and

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loves him for it: for indeed that turn, that change of heart, is the work of God himself. Without the Holy Spirit working on our hearts, we should remain stupid and obstinate, drudging on still in the service of the devil, and willing to die in our sins. But God touches the heart, and softens it. He bids us turn, and look to the cross, and see, by faith, who it was that bore our sins in his own body on the accursed tree. Then our tears begin to flow: then every token of love, that a father can shew, is heaped upon such unworthy wretches as we.

5. The account closes with a description of a full and free Gospel, offered to the vilest sinner. The father no sooner hears the words, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son," than he immediately adopts him anew, calls for the best robe, puts a ring on his finger, has him well shod, and has the fatted calf killed to feast him. In short, he provides him with all he could want, or wish.

Let me now propose a few questions on this subject: and let me speak with earnestness and affection. Have *you* become weary of sin? and have you learned that even your own good works, which you try to perform of yourself, are no better than filthy rags? Have you understood what is that righteousness of God, which is through the faith of Christ? Is your soul clothed with this spotless robe, covering all your sins, and making you well-pleasing in the eyes of God; because he beholds you, not as you are in yourself, but as you are in Christ? Remember, that you are invited to the

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marriage-supper of the Lamb: but if you do not wear the robe, and the ring, offered in the Gospel, the Master of the feast will say, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?"

But oh, if you receive this Saviour with a broken and a believing heart, what songs of joy will be sung in heaven on your behalf! "There is joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Perhaps you might look upon *one* soul, among so many millions, as too small a matter for God to think of. But it is far otherwise: for your *one* soul Christ died! And if you are recovered from the ways of sin to God, all heaven will ring with shouts of praise, while angels will say of you, "This one soul was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found!"

PRAYER.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth himself, to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.

And now, O Heavenly Father, seeing thou art so gracious unto us, we beseech thee, for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, to receive us again to thine own home, and keep us there, and let us not turn

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again to folly! Let our hearts rejoice in thy salvation; and find more pleasure in the very lowest place in Thy service, than ever we tasted in the ways of sin. And never suffer us to open our mouths, either to murmur or to boast; but cause us to go softly all our days, and to remember and be confounded because of our shame, though thou art pacified towards us.

We will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. And help us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; so that all men, beholding the work of grace in us, may see that it is thy work; and confess, that where sin abounded, there hath grace much more abounded.

We ask these things for the glory of thy great name, through our only Mediator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

XVII.

UNCEASING PRAYER.

LUKE xviii. 1—8.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

Yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

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And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Our Blessed Saviour has, in many passages of the Gospel, encouraged us to pray. He says: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Our Saviour has also taught us how to pray. What child is there, that has not learned to say the Lord's Prayer? "Our Father, which art in heaven," &c. That prayer expresses, in few words, all we can desire, for the glory of God, for the salvation of our souls, and for the wants of our bodies.

When we pray to God for the blessings of this life, we should remember that He alone knows what is best for us in this world. If we might have our own wish, we should ask for nothing but plenty of money, health and long life, and all those things which the world calls good. And yet the Lord may see, that it is much the best for us to be poor, and sick, and afflicted; and if we can only trust in Him, as a wise and kind Father, we shall be glad to labour on in his service, and leave all our worldly matters in his hands. "For our Heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of:" and he has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

When we ask for blessings for our souls, we

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never can ask too much. We need every thing; and God is ready to bestow on us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." In coming to Christ by prayer, we come to a fountain of living water, which never dries up; and we eat of bread which endureth to everlasting life. Jesus himself has said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

The power to pray, we have not from ourselves: it is the gift of God's Holy Spirit. He it is who puts into our minds good desires; and He it is who gives us faith, without which we should receive nothing of the Lord. We have need, therefore, continually to begin our prayers with, "Lord, teach us to pray!"—and, "Let thy good Spirit help our infirmities, for Jesu's sake!"

Suffer me to ask, "Have you learned thus to pray?" If not, O now begin! And if you find it difficult, yet, at least, remember this short prayer, and often repeat it from your heart: "Lord, teach me how to pray aright!" Be sure of this, that the longest prayer, without faith, will gain nothing: but the shortest prayer, nay, even a sigh or a groan, sent up to heaven with faith in Christ, will surely be heard.

But, as St. Paul says, we should "pray without ceasing. And our most merciful Saviour spake the parable which I have read to you, to teach us "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

He compares the humble praying soul to a

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widow. A widow, you know, is naturally weak, helpless, and unprotected. She has lost her husband, who was her support and defence. In the same manner, our souls are weak and defenceless; and "we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." Vain, also, is the help of man.

This widow, our Saviour mentions, had an adversary. There was some one, in the city where she lived, who grieved and oppressed her. It is just so with our souls. While we are in this world, if we heartily desire to serve Christ, we shall find enemies on every side. The world itself will be our enemy: the children of the world hate the children of God; and they employ ridicule, ill-nature, and temptations, to draw them from God. Satan, too, is the bitter enemy of our souls: he would do any thing to tempt us, or drive us, from God: especially, he endeavours to make us unbelieving, discontented, and weary of prayer. He seems to whisper, "It is vain for you to wait on God: he will never hear you!" Above all, we we have the worst of enemies within ourselves; "a heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Moreover, when this poor woman came to the judge of the city, to be protected from her adversary, the judge, for a long time, would not hear her. Now, her case seemed hopeless; but she went on wearying him with her cries, till at last she forced him to hear her cause, and to do her justice.

We have, in heaven, a Judge and Saviour, who

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sometimes, we may think, does not hear: and yet He is only waiting to see whether we will "pray without ceasing." When a temptation to sin presses us sorely, we are sometimes ready to think that the Spirit of God is departing from us. When sorrows upon sorrows, and troubles upon troubles, roll over us, we are ready to sink, and to cry out, "All these things are against me." When the soul walketh in darkness, and hath no light, the painful thought springs up, "Where is now thy God?"—To all these trials of the soul, there is one answer: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Did this unjust judge bestir himself; "and will not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Faith is what we want: faith to begin with, faith all through, and faith to the end. This is what the parable is intended to teach. Oh, what a precious gift of God is faith! Faith is the life of prayer; and prayer increases faith. I cannot do better than leave with you these two short texts of Scripture: "Pray without ceasing;" and, "Lord, increase our faith!"

PRAYER.

O Lord, who seest that we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; let thy good Spirit help our infirmities! O teach us what to ask, and how to order our cause before

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thee. Let us not be discouraged because we are vile, and sinful; seeing thou invitest such, and such only, to come for pardon, and the healing of their souls. Let not our ignorance keep us back; since thou art ever ready to give wisdom to the simple, when they ask in faith. Suffer us not to faint, through weariness, or unbelief; but may we be strong in faith, continuing instant in prayer; watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication, for ourselves, and for all men. Assist us in coming boldly to thy throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

Holy Lord God! our iniquities oft-times prevail against us: O be thou merciful unto our sins! Remove from us the curse which they would bring upon us; subdue their power; and enable us to walk in Christ Jesus, with a believing and an upright heart. Let no condemnation rest on us; nor any unholy thing cleave to us. But may Jesus be made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Comfort thy people, O Lord, when they are in any tribulation, or persecution, for the name of Jesus. Purify, and establish thy Church: be thou in the midst of her; and, finally, bring us to thine everlasting kingdom above, where we shall ever give thanks unto thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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XVIII.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

LUKE xviii. 9—14.

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!

I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Two sorts of persons are here described.

"The Pharisee" means the self-righteous; those who are self-pleased, self-admiring, self-satisfied. "The Publican" means the self-abased; those who are low in their own eyes, feeling what miserable sinners they are.

Both went to the temple at the usual hour of prayer: but Jesus Christ, who reads the heart, tells us in what spirit they prayed.

The Pharisee did not pray at all; but boasted of his own righteousness. He begins with a common phrase, "Thank God!" but it is plain that he is not praising God, but himself. All his speech is about himself; giving reasons, why he thinks God ought to be pleased with him.

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First, he praises himself for not having committed the worst actions. He does not consider that he may often have had the worst thoughts. He says, he was not an extortioner: but, if he loved money, that was just as bad in the sight of God. He was not an adulterer; but our Saviour says, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Next, happening to cast his eyes on the Publican, he sets him down for a very bad character; and cannot help remarking, how much holier he himself is. People, who think well of themselves, are very ready to think hardly of other men. Therefore, when you begin to run down other people, stop, and ask, "Have I judged myself? Have I considered how my heart appears before God? Let me have pity on others; for, oh, how much pity and forgiveness do I need myself!"

The Pharisee next praises himself for some outward duties. "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." He had the form of godliness; but knew not the power thereof. How little did he know of loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself! how little, of humility! how little, of the spirit of prayer!

Thus it is that some think they shall go to heaven; because they have lived a respectable life, sometimes said their prayers, or received the sacrament; paid their debts, and been on good terms with their neighbours. They do not know how evil their hearts are before God; and how much

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they need pardon through Christ, and the gift of a new heart from his Spirit. Such are not in the way to heaven!

The publican was a very different kind of man. He was so burdened with his unworthiness and sin, so ashamed before God, and so deeply pained in his own heart, that he stood afar off, bent down his eyes, and smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!

How kind is the Saviour, in teaching us this short prayer—so short, that we may easily remember it! These few words contain the sum and substance of repentance, and faith. True Christians often use this prayer, in health, in sickness, and on their death-beds. They have nothing to say of themselves; only, that they are sinners. They never did any good, excepting what they have done by the grace of God. This, therefore, is to the praise of his grace, and leaves them no ground for boasting. But their sins, their infirmities, and failings, are innumerable. This thought fills them with humility and grief. They gladly come to Christ, who gives them remission of sins, and justifies them freely by his grace. Thus, they glory only in the cross of Christ.

PRAYER.

O most holy God, who knowest the very secrets of our hearts; what are we, that ever we should boast ourselves in thy presence, or despise even the poorest of our fellow-sinners! If we are indeed

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thy children, it was thy free grace that made us to differ from others. For what have we, that we did not receive? And how little have we used our privileges to the glory of thy name! Too often we have robbed thee of thy honour, by coveting the praise of our fellow-creatures, and walking in the vanity of our minds.

O bestow on us true humility, and grace to put away all proud thoughts, and all high looks! Enable us, in lowliness of mind, to esteem others better than ourselves. Cause us to remember our former iniquities with shame and confusion of face. Show to us the secret corruptions of our own hearts; and endue us with strength to mortify them. O let that mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus! And let our glorying be in Him, and in his righteousness, now and for ever! Amen.

XIX.

REGENERATION; OR, THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 1—10.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when

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he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

NICODEMUS, who is here spoken of, was a man of great dignity. He belonged to a religious party who were called Pharisees, and who thought themselves more holy than any others. These proud Pharisees could not endure Jesus, because he was so meek and lowly. Many of the common people loved Jesus; and this made the Pharisees envy him still more. But the reason why they hated him most of all, was, because he spoke so much of heart-religion. Jesus condemned them for their pride, covetousness, and hypocrisy: and they, in return, hated Jesus for his plain dealing, and for his genuine holiness. Wicked and proud men, especially when they pretend to holiness, cannot bear those who are truly spiritual, humble and holy.

Nicodemus must have found it very difficult to break off from such company. Indeed, he did not dare at first to do it openly. When our neighbours are bitter enemies to the Gospel, it is no wonder

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that beginners should be afraid of being thought religious. Still, if Christ has touched our hearts, we shall, in one way or another, feel after him; as men feel about in the dark, to find what they want. It is a blessed sign, when the heart begins to ask, "Where, and how, may I find my Saviour?"

We do not hear that Jesus condemned Nicodemus for coming to him, at first, by night. He saw, no doubt, that he was half afraid; but He saw that there was a spark of grace in his heart, and he would not put it out. No; he fanned it to a flame. He began at once conversing with him about heart-religion. We see, from this, what it is that Jesus considers to be the most necessary of all things: not mere ceremonies; not mere disputing about religion; not mere good behaviour, or reformation of conduct: but, a new heart; a change of heart, from a state of sin to holiness.

Will you permit me to read you some remarks concerning this change of heart? May the Spirit of Christ be our Teacher! Nicodemus, though perhaps a learned man, was very ignorant on this subject, till his own soul was enlightened by the Holy Spirit. May that same Spirit be your Teacher, and mine!

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, to explain the great change we all need, which is called, "A new birth," and, "Being born of God," we may observe, that we are all born, once, in a natural way, into

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the world. Nicodemus notices this, and asks, How can a man be born a second time? We answer, The second birth is a spiritual birth. Man is born in sin: to become holy, therefore, he must be born again, that is, born of the Holy Spirit: then he will have a holy nature.

That we are at first born with a sinful nature, is, alas! too plain to be denied. As fishes swim, and birds fly, because it is their nature; so men, from the first, love and practise sin, because it is natural to them to do so. Do we not see children passionate, and quarrelsome? Are they not selfish, and greedy; cunning, and given to lying? Are not some of them cruel, others sullen, and many of them disobedient to parents? What causes this, but an evil nature? The best education can keep it down only a very little. Nay, as men grow up, do we not see them grow more selfish, and cunning; more covetous, and fraudulent; more violent, and self-willed? The laws keep most men from excessive cruelty, and from murder; and good breeding makes many persons seem virtuous, and respectable. But all this outside does not prove that the heart is good: on the contrary, there is one thing, which I must now mention, that proves us all to have exceedingly evil hearts.

Do you say, "What is this?" It is, our want of love to God. Who loves God with all his heart? Who loves private prayer to Him? Who loves God above all things? Who loves to meditate upon His word day and night? Naturally, not

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one of us. "The carnal heart is enmity against God." He who has not found out that he is naturally the enemy of God, knows nothing of himself yet, as he ought to know. O let us pray, that the light of the Holy Spirit would shine into the darkness of our hearts, that we may see how low we are fallen! that we may say, like Job, "I am vile": or, like David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!"

These, then, are the hearts which need changing: and who can change them, but the Holy Spirit? He, and He alone, is the author of this new birth. Man can no more create himself the second time, than he could the first. He must be new created of God.

It is further related, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Our Saviour appears, by one part of these words, to mean Baptism; which he intended, before he left this earth, to ordain as the outward means of admission into the Church. But he certainly does not mean to say, that, in baptism, the heart of every baptized person is born again, or changed from a sinful nature to a holy one. It is true, that baptism, by bringing us into the visible Church, does bring us into a state of great advantage: just as Circumcision gave much advantage, every way, to the Jews of old: and yet thousands, and tens of thousands, of baptized men and women, live, and die, in sin; plainly showing that they

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never knew what it was to have the saving grace of God in their hearts.

Nicodemus could know nothing of baptism, for it was not yet appointed by Christ; but, he ought to have known about this new birth. Therefore Jesus says to him, "Art thou a Master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

But the time is too short for me to explain all this subject at once: I wish, for the present, to show you, that we are all born in sin, and children of wrath; so that we all need to be born again: and without this new birth, no man can see the kingdom of God. O think of this solemn truth! and if your mind is in darkness, pray for the light of the Holy Spirit. Pray that Christ may be your Teacher. Say to him, humbly, like Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" Jesus, by his Spirit, will tell you how. When He teaches, he speaks as never man spake.

PRAYER.

O God, who art a Spirit, and requirest those that worship thee to worship in spirit and in truth; enable us to draw nigh unto thee, with a holy and acceptable service, through the mediation of thy Son Jesus.

We know not, alas! what we should ask for as we ought; but do Thou prepare our hearts to pray, and then graciously answer our supplications.

O look not on us, as we are in ourselves! Our hearts are corrupt, and deceitful, and full of evil.

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We have departed from thee, and have walked in the vanity of our minds, being alienated from thee because of the blindness of our hearts. But blot out all our past misdeeds, and freely accept us to thy favour, through thy dear Son: and, for His sake, create in us a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within us. Shine into our hearts with the light of thy Holy Spirit. Guide us into all truth. Remove every error, that thou seest lying as a vail on our hearts. Inspire us with a love of the Gospel. Richly endue us with grace, that we may follow on, seeking after the knowledge of our adorable Redeemer, and boldly confessing His name before all men, for the sake of the same, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

XX.

REGENERATION; OR, THE NEW BIRTH.

(*Continued.*)

JOHN iii. 1—10. (See page 80.)

A MAN, who is ignorant of the new birth of the soul, must be amazed, and confounded, to hear such things as Christ spake to Nicodemus on this subject. But, indeed, every thing in the Bible is strange to those, who do not study the Bible with earnest prayer. May I ask you only this one question: When reading the Bible, have you prayed for the Holy Spirit of God?—He alone can teach you spiritual things: for St. Paul says,

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"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." That is, we remain in darkness, till the Spirit of Christ shines into our hearts.

May this Blessed Spirit enlighten our hearts now, while we consider again this subject of the New Birth!

Our Lord says, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." He means, that the carnal, and sinful nature of our first parents, Adam and Eve, descends to their children through all the generations of man; but, when any man is brought to a state of spiritual holiness, this new birth of his soul comes from the Holy Spirit acting upon him.

"Marvel not," our Lord says to Nicodemus, "marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." For no doubt he saw the looks of Nicodemus, full of wonder at this new doctrine: the more Nicodemus hears of it, the more he is lost in perplexity. And this is the case with every thinking man, till the rays of saving light dart on his soul; and then he feels within himself, what it is, to be born of God.

Our Saviour, however, to make his meaning plainer, compares this work of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind. He says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

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This comparing of the work of the Spirit to the wind, shows us, that there is something we *cannot* understand, and something we *can*, concerning the New Birth. It teaches this important rule—that we are to judge of the work of the Spirit within us, *by its effects*. None of us can see the wind going and coming; but we can hear its sound; and we can see the effect of it, by the moving of the trees, and such like. So the most spiritual man on earth cannot, with his mind, behold the Spirit of God; but he can tell what effects that Blessed Spirit has wrought, and is daily working, on his heart, and in his life.

Perhaps you would like that I should explain what some of these effects are. Most gladly will I try to do so;—and, at each step, let us solemnly pause to inquire, Am I thus born of God?

One mark of this new birth of the soul is, Having our Understanding enlightened with new views of things divine. Till then, the soul is dark: but now the Bible becomes plain, and delightful: the words of Christ are to us spirit and life. We see what a hateful thing sin is, and how it needed an infinite atonement in Christ. Beholding Jesus, we adore the mystery of Emmanuel, 'God with us.' The blood of Christ, shed upon the cross for our redemption, is seen to be unspeakably precious. We understand what faith is, and what it is to be justified freely by grace. The work of the Blessed Spirit is understood, now, by its being felt. Having received the Spirit, which is of God, we know the

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things that are freely given to us of God. Oh! let us reflect—Are the eyes of *our* understanding thus enlightened?

Then, another mark of our being born of God, is, that our Affections are truly touched with heavenly things. Once, the heart only thought of heaven in a general way, but without any real joy, or love; but now the new-born soul longs to see Jesus in his glory. The unconverted sinner cared nothing about hell, though he would fain have persuaded himself that there is no such place: but as soon as his heart is awakened by the Spirit of God, he trembles to think how near he was to everlasting torments; and he flies to Jesus, to deliver him from the wrath to come. Once, he loved only himself or his family: and above all, he loved the things of this world: God was not in all his thoughts. But, when he is born again, a holy love is implanted in his soul; and he loves his Saviour, and all his brethren in Christ, with a pure heart, fervently. Formerly, perhaps, he performed some acts of piety; but it was *as a task:* now, he works from hearty love to the Saviour. Here let us pause again; and ask — Has holy love got the possession of my whole soul?

Another mark is, the bent of the Will. Indeed, it is the will, that chiefly marks our character. As is the will, such is the man. Till we are born of God, our will is contrary to His. The wicked, through the pride of his heart, will not seek after God. He lives on in sin, just as he pleases. If

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any one entreats him to turn to God, he slights the call; or, he grows angry at it. He says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? Who is Lord over me? I will be my own master." But when the Spirit of God changes him, he is bowed down in submission, and he cries, "Lord! what wouldest thou have me to do? O teach me to do Thy will!" Methinks you are ready to say—And is *my* will thus changed?

The working of the Conscience, and the warring against Sin, are very striking marks of the New Birth. Beforetimes, conscience was dead: now, it is alive, and active. A man begins to stir up the thoughts in his breast, and asks, "What is here? What! are my old corruptions still within? I had hoped they were dead; but I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." This warring against sin is one of the sure marks of real conversion to God: it arises from a man's sincerely aiming at universal holiness. And therefore I would put it closely and affectionately to you—Can your conscience faithfully say, that there is this struggle against sin, in *you*?

Many more things might be said: but I will add one, and one only. Prayer is a mark of the soul's being born of God. Prayer never comes from the heart, till the Holy Spirit has given us a new life: then, like a little new-born infant, the soul shows its life by its cries. Oh, for this spirit of prayer! If you have it not, pray that you may be taught to pray: if you have it, "pray without ceasing:" for

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daily prayer is daily life. And he who is thus born of God, living a life of prayer, shall assuredly, at length, behold his Saviour in glory; when all his cries and struggles against sin, here below, shall be exchanged for perfect holiness and everlasting praises, in heaven above.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who knowest the very secrets of our hearts, and without whose teaching we never can know ourselves and Thee; turn the thoughts of our hearts inward, that we may be enabled to know who, and what manner of persons, we are! Raise our benighted souls, to behold thy glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. O let us not cease from searching our hearts, till we know whether we have the likeness of thy Children in us! And if we find it not, suffer us not to deceive ourselves in this matter. Help us, O Lord, so to exercise our consciences, and so to judge ourselves now, that we may not be condemned hereafter of Thee!

O our heart-searching God, we would ask ourselves, as in thy sight—Whom have we resolved to serve, and to obey? Whom have we chosen as our Master? Whom, or what, do we love, above all else? Where is our treasure? and where is our heart?—Stir us up, thou quickening Spirit, that we may not waver between two opinions; nor ever rest, till our souls are fully given up to thee!

If, O Lord, thy grace hath already changed our hearts, from a sinful to a holy state, then we would

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thankfully own that it is Thy work, even thine only. Perfect, O Lord, this good work in us; keeping us, by thy power, through faith, steadfast unto the end: and cause us to abound more and more in all the fruits of the Spirit, which are to the glory and praise of thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

XXI.

THE VINE, AND THE BRANCHES.

JOHN xv. 1—5.

I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

THE vine is a fruit-tree, which grows very abundantly in that country where our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt, when he was on earth. It consists almost entirely of branches; and these are spread out over wood-work, or trained against a wall, so that the sun and air may come to them. In this way, if they are properly taken care of, they bear plentiful clusters of grapes; which are good for food, as well as for making wine.

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When our Lord likens himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches, he means to show us the state of the Church of Christ. In this vine, there are some living branches, and some dead ones. So, in the Church of Christ, there are some Christians truly alive unto God; while there are many, who only have a name to live, but are dead.

Now believers, who are the true branches, are joined to Christ by faith in Him. Thus He, together with them, makes one true vine. He makes them his, first, by pardoning all their sins; then, by giving to them his own holy nature. He sheds abroad his Holy Spirit into their hearts, and fills them with life. Just as the juice or sap flows from the root and stem into the branches, so does grace flow from Christ into the hearts of true believers. And they need this grace fresh every day; "for without Him they can do nothing." If they leave him for a moment, they become weak and helpless. Having, therefore, began to believe in him, they continually pray for more grace. And this he freely gives them: so that the more they pray, the more their faith increases; and the more their faith increases, so much the more life they have in their souls. They become strong branches, and bear good fruit. They grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the happy state of true believers.

Our Saviour, moreover, has said, "A tree is known by its fruits." A living branch of the vine is known by the excellent grapes that grow on it:

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thus also true believers are known to be such, both by themselves and others. It is felt, and seen, by the inward joys which they experience; by their excellent tempers; and by the good works which they bring forth. In the beginning of their Christian life, old and sinful habits trouble them much: indeed, they are always much troubled with sin, even to their dying day. Still, as the branches grow older, they generally grow longer and stronger; and when the true believer keeps near to Christ, he grows more and more in faith, even that "faith which worketh by love." At first, perhaps, he loved his Saviour a little; but now, as he grows in Christ, he loves that Saviour much. At first, he had not made up his mind to love all his fellow-creatures: some he loved, and some he disliked; but now he loves all, even his enemies, and prays for all. Once he loved to have his own way, and was very impatient if any thing crossed him; but now he is constantly saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.' Once, he was all for enjoying this world: perhaps he fell into the grossest sins: but now he strives to be temperate in all things, and aims at heaven, as his portion. Once, he cared for nobody but himself: but now he desires to do as much good as he can unto all men.

Are not these good fruits? Is not this a fruitful branch, to the glory of God, and for the comfort of the Church?—But let us stop for a moment; and see how God deals with such believers, in order to make them more and more fruitful.

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Christ says, "My Father is the Husbandman."—Now, if you observe the gardener pruning a fruit-tree, you will see that he cuts away a great number of long shoots and young boughs, and throws them on the ground, as of no use. You would almost think that he was spoiling the tree; but this is the proper way to make the branches, that remain, fruitful. So also does our Heavenly Father send many sorrows and temptations, in order to make grace more fruitful in us. Affliction is his pruning-knife. When the true believer is much afflicted, he should not think that God is cutting him down to nothing. No; he is only cutting away useless branches, in order that the tree may really become more fruitful; that there may be more humility, more diligence and devotion, more resignation, and more love.

But, in this vine, there are some branches which are dead. They stand in their place, and seemingly belong to the vine; but they really have no life in them. So there are many who call themselves Christians, but to whom Christ will say, in the last day, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." O, then, search your heart and life, to see whether you are a true, or a false Christian! Judge by the fruits. And do not flatter yourself for some good actions that you perform: for you may hang a few bunches of grapes upon a thorn-bush; but these do not make a brier, a vine. A few good works, put on now and then, are only an outside religion. Look into the real state of

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your heart: and may the Spirit of God show what is your true character, and bring you to Christ!

PRAYER.

We thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast, by thy good providence, caused us to be born in a Christian land, where we are surrounded by so many means of grace. Yet, suffer us not to deceive ourselves with the name of Christian, if we have not known the power of Christ dwelling within us. O graft us into the True Vine, as living branches of the same. Unite us to Jesus by a true and living faith, that we may bring forth fruit unto holiness. Pardon our past unprofitableness; and cause us to abound in every good word and work. Sanctify all our trials and afflictions, drawing our souls from earthly things, and filling us with pure and heavenly affections. Effectually incline us, by thy Spirit, to choose Thee, as our present and our eternal portion; and enable us to continue in thy love, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

XXII.

THE OPENING OF THE HEART.

ACTS xvi. 13—15.

And on the Sabbath, we went out of the city, by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

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And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

It is a thing most necessary, to have our hearts opened to receive the word of the Lord. And yet it is impossible for a man, by himself, to open either his own heart, or the heart of another. This is the work of Almighty God, and of Him alone. "He openeth, and no man shutteth."

Generally, however, God employs certain means in doing this. For example: He sends forth pious Ministers, to preach the Gospel in the ears of the people. It is through His goodness, that places of worship are built, "where prayer is wont to be made." He is well pleased to behold worshippers assemble in such places. In this manner, Lydia, and other women, resorted to a quiet place of worship, which was a little out of the city, by a river side. Here the Apostle Paul found them, and worshipped together with them. Seeing them inclined to listen to his preaching, he discoursed to them concerning Jesus Christ. This was his favourite subject; because it was the most needful, the most glorious one. This was the message which he had everywhere to deliver; namely, this "faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." By public preaching, and by visiting people at their dwellings, and by pious conversations, Christ the Saviour is to be made known.

Perhaps most of the women, who heard Paul

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preach, were rather attentive: but of Lydia it is particularly related, that the Lord opened her heart, so "that she attended to the things spoken of Paul." She was a stranger in that place, and had come to trade in an article of finery. She was a seller of purple. Many persons, in her case, would have said, "I must mind my business first: when I get home, and am comfortably settled, with money enough, then I may attend to religion." But Lydia lost no time in welcoming the tidings of Salvation: and the reason of this is given, "The Lord opened her heart."

It is grievous to think, that there are some who enjoy many religious opportunities, but throw them away altogether. They hear the Gospel with ears open, but with hearts shut. Was it not so, when Christ preached? Did not the Pharisees hear him? —and yet, the more they heard, so much the more their ears grew heavy, and their heart waxed fat. So likewise the rich young man, mentioned in the Gospel, was favoured by Christ with a discourse particularly addressed to himself; but the discourse was so plain, and cut so deep at his favourite sin, love of his wealth, that he went away, and would hear no more of Christ. And in this very city of Philippi, the preaching of the Apostle was bitterly hated by many.

O let me ask, Is there some favourite sin which you will not part with, and which makes the words of Christ unwelcome to you? Is there something in your heart, which hinders you from private

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prayer? Never will you be truly blessed, till the door of your heart is opened by the Lord. Never think yourself happy, till sin is pardoned; till the love of sin is cast out; and the Spirit of Christ enters, to dwell within you.

It is very delightful, however, to see persons attentive to the word spoken. So, Lydia gave heed to what St. Paul said: she drank it in. This is always a good sign: we cannot help hoping that something good will come of it, when hearers listen with fixed attention. They are in the right way to profit.

As soon as Lydia had received Christ into her heart, she desired to honour his name, by making a public profession of her faith. She was baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus. She earnestly desired to have the Apostle and other pious persons visiting in her house. And when Paul and Silas had been cruelly beaten, still we read, at the end of this chapter, that she was not ashamed to receive them. If we love Christ, and his servants, we shall make no secret of it: we shall gladly bear the cross with them. When the heart is opened by the Lord, our mouth will also be opened in praising the Saviour, and entreating others to come to him.

Let me now ask of you a few plain questions. First, Do you put yourself into the way of having your heart opened? Do you go where Christ is preached? Have you listened to the word of God, and have you tried to pray?—Another question I would ask, is this: Do you find that your heart

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really does begin to open?—If so, continue praying, that it may open more and more. Let not sin harden it. Especially, do not keep away from Christ, through unbelief. But rather, let the thoughts of your ignorance and sinfulness draw you nearer to Jesus, that you may receive from Him pardon, peace, and holiness.

PRAYER.

Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy Law; and effectually work in our hearts, that we may profitably learn thy holy word. Blessed be thy name, for the gift of the Holy Scriptures, for every faithful Minister and Teacher of the same, and for every opportunity of prayer that we enjoy. Show thyself present to us, whenever we draw nigh unto thee. Give to us more grace, and work in us the work of faith with power.

Dispose us, O Heavenly Father, fervently to love thy servants who labour in the Gospel. Give us grace boldly to confess Christ; and to share in the sufferings and reproach of thy people.

O let thy blessed Gospel be preached everywhere in this land, and throughout the whole earth! Wheresoever thy ministering servants may labour, constrain multitudes to welcome the glad tidings of pardon, peace, and holiness, through Jesus Christ; for whom we thank thee; and to whom, with thyself, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, and glory, world without end.

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XXIII.

THE JAILOR'S CONVERSION.

ACTS xvi. 23—34.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

How happy are the servants of Christ! sorrowful, yet always rejoicing! To them there ariseth light in the darkness. Paul and Silas pray and sing as cheerfully in the prison, as if it were the House of God, and the gate of heaven. They forget the smart of their stripes, and their heavy chains, while

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they call on the sweet name of Jesus, for whom they were suffering.

The ungodly are not so. The hard-hearted jailor goes to sleep, while the prisoners listen to the singing and prayers of Paul and Silas. But he sleeps miserably; and awakes frightfully, in the midst of an earthquake. He no sooner sees the prison doors all open, than he is ready to throw himself, by self-murder, into the arms of the devil.

O sinners! think how near you are to death—how near to hell! The sinner is always destroying his soul; and may be tempted to destroy his body. When he lies down at night, he sleeps at the edge of the pit of hell. O think! have *you* fled from this wrath?

But the voice of mercy is heard—"Do thyself no harm." Stop in the midst of thy sins. Turn round, to see the hand of Mercy. Let Mercy save you. Jesus is able to save to the uttermost.

And now, see what a different man the jailor became, as soon as hope sprang up! He immediately makes his way to Paul and Silas, those messengers of hope. He falls down before them, trembling. This arose partly from his fright; but much more from having his conscience wakened, by the feeling of his sins. And now he asks the most solemn question that can possibly be thought of. This is the question, for you, and for me, and for all sinners. Every man born into the world should be as eager and anxious as the jailor was, in asking, "What must I do to be saved?"

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The sinner cannot save himself. His past sins are a debt, which he cannot himself pay off. Another must pay it. Trying to be good in future cannot save us. Even when the converted sinner obtains the gift of a new heart, still his good works will fall short, and he will need salvation to be freely given him by Christ.

This is the truth to which the jailor was brought: and we must all come to the same: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

St. Paul would have a great deal to say, in a short time, on this subject: but the jailor drank in his doctrine eagerly; he took of the water of life freely; and that very night he believed, and was baptized, with his whole house.

Let me now tell you, more particularly, how *you* may be saved, through Jesus Christ. Remember, that he shed his precious blood to take away your sins. Go then, in confession and prayer, and with faith in his blood, and wash away your sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. Know, also, that your own good works will never be perfect enough to recommend you to God. But he has wrought out a perfect righteousness, in which you may be clothed, if you will accept it. Ask of him to put it on you. Do not go about to establish your own righteousness.

Yet, you must be made holy, if you would be saved. Reflect, that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God, and offering his Holy Spirit, to make

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you holy, if you will ask him for this gift. Will you not then believe in this Saviour? Will you not accept pardon and peace, through His blood? Do you not desire to be found in Him, and accounted righteous through His righteousness? Will you not love, serve, and pray to this Saviour, who died on the cross for you; and who is now praying in heaven for all who come to Him?

PRAYER.

O God, our Creator and Preserver, we may well fall down before thee, confounded, when we remember how carelessly we have walked through the many dangers of our life, forgetful of thee, and unprepared for Judgment. There is but a step between us and death; and yet we have been hurried on by many foolish and hurtful lusts, which, but for thy forbearance, must long since have drowned us in destruction and perdition. We are amazed that we were not suffered utterly to destroy ourselves. Oh! let our cry now be, What must we do to be saved? Who shall pardon and deliver us? How shall we prepare for the great account, which we must shortly give, before thee, the Judge of quick and dead?

We flee unto thee, O Lord, through Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come. We pray thee to break the bonds of sin, wherewith we have been bound; and to undo the snares of Satan, by which we have been entangled; and so deliver us from going down into the pit. Yea, may our souls

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delight in thee, as our reconciled Father in Christ. We plead in His name. Blot out our many sins: forgive us all that debt, which we are unable to pay. Bestow on us a living faith: and let thy Holy Ghost, the Comforter, so work in us, that, for the time to come, we may joyfully serve Thee alone; and be at length numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

XXIV.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

ROMANS iii. 9—19.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Their feet are swift to shed blood:

Destruction and misery are in their ways:

And the way of peace have they not known:

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

OUR Saviour Jesus Christ has said, "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" and

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he added, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." The words just read from St. Paul's Epistle are intended to make us know and feel that we are sinners. We are all under sin. People of all ranks and degrees, and of every age and country; men, women, children, are all "under sin." As it is with diseases, some show themselves worse than others; so it is with sin: and therefore the Holy Scriptures here describe several kinds of sin. One, perhaps, may say, "I have not committed this sin:" and another may say, "I have not committed that sin." Still, all have committed some kind of sin; yea, many kinds. All have this dreadful disease in their souls; and all ought to be thankful that there is such a Physician as Jesus Christ, ready to heal them.

Let us attend to the different expressions of St. Paul. And, instead of making excuses, as if we were not the worst of sinners, let us endeavour to find out in what degree we are sinners before God. Whenever we begin to make vain excuses, let us remember the words of St. Paul—that every mouth is to be stopped, so that the whole world may be proved guilty before God. And may the Holy Spirit prepare our hearts, to think humbly of ourselves!

We will consider sins of the heart first.—"There is none that understandeth." But perhaps you say, "What sin is there in this? I do not understand, because I am no scholar; I am not book-learned." If you are making ignorance your excuse, then

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look at the next sentence: "There is none that seeketh after God." Not seeking, shows not caring: here lies your sin. Surely you must confess that this is very sinful;—not to seek God, not to pray to him, not to wish that you knew him. Have you not spent many days of your life (perhaps years) in ignorance and carelessness about God? Would you not think it very sinful in children to neglect their parents? and have not you neglected your Heavenly Father? St. Paul says, "They are all gone out of the way." So, I fear, have you. You have not taken the right way to be instructed. The Bible has been thrown on one side; you have thought it troublesome to go to a place of worship; and you have known little or nothing of prayer. Think, I pray you, of these things. They show, very plainly, that willing ignorance is a sin. Indeed, not to love God, and not to desire the knowledge of His ways, is the very root of all other sins.

And what is the fruit of a life of carelessness? St. Paul says, it is unprofitable: "They are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." It is a most melancholy sight, to see a whole neighbourhood unprofitable—showing, almost, no signs of religion. Perhaps you may say, "But I do nobody any harm." Alas! how little do we think of all the harm we do! We do harm when we neglect doing good. We help to keep up the general irreligion. By neglecting the Bible, and public worship, we encourage others to neglect them. Day after day men live on in

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carelessness, and never get nearer to God. This is not only sin, but it is sin of the very worst kind. I wish you felt it so. And if you have felt it, I wish you and I felt it still more.

St. Paul then describes several other kinds of sin; particularly, lying, swearing and cruelty. What common sins these are! Even little children very soon are guilty of lying; and grown-up people think it no harm to lie, when they want to hide a fault, or to serve an end. Many, also, are ready enough to cheat, if they can get their living by it. Yet, most certainly, lying and cheating are sins that will ruin the soul for ever. The devil is the father of lies; and all liars, without exception, unless they repent, will have their portion with him, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.—Swearing is also a very common sin. There are many persons who hardly ever utter a sentence without an oath. —Cruelty, too, is a far more common sin than many suspect. When you see little children tormenting flies, or when you see grown-up people cruel to their beasts, you forget, perhaps, that this is the very temper of the devil. There are, indeed, few murderers; but, oh! how many are there, that have this evil spirit in their hearts. How many rail and fight, and would kill, if they dared! Remember, "He that hateth his brother, is a murderer."

But what a picture is this that I see of my fellow-creatures, when St. Paul says, "Destruction and misery are in their ways." There is no telling

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what wretchedness there is in the world; and all produced by sin. Take the example of London, or any great town or village in the country: what drunkenness! what open profligacy! what sabbath-breaking! what tempting of one another to sin! what sinning with a high hand, working all uncleanness with greediness! what crowds attending play-houses, and fairs and shows; but never going to a place of worship! It is a shame even to speak of the sins committed by men and women, day after day. Shocking to think, that many get their living only by sin! Sin is their trade;—and a miserable livelihood it is: they do not live out half their days: they waste, and pine away, diseased and deserted; till in a short time they come to death's door. Indeed, those who seem the happiest sinners, are still miserable beings: they have no peace, no fear of God, no hope of heaven.

And now let me affectionately, but earnestly, ask of you, "Is not sin the disease of *your* soul?" I would not touch the wound, if I did not know that it may be healed. But there is a Physician, our Blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is able to heal the very worst. As many as come to Him with faith, and touch Him, shall be perfectly cured. Only, I leave with you this short question, in His name—"Wilt thou be made whole?"

PRAYER.

O Lord, most holy, just and good! we bow down before thee, confessing ourselves to be vile

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earth, and miserable sinners. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in us. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.

O our God! when we look upon ourselves as we are in thy sight, we are constrained to lay our hand upon our mouth, and cry, Unclean, unclean! And wilt thou, O Lord! look upon such an one? Wilt thou have pity upon a dying worm, that has dared to rebel against thy holy will?

We do not come before thee, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies in Christ Jesus. We come by that new and living way, which he hath prepared for us: for the sake of what he suffered on the cross, grant to us remission of sins that are past; accept us graciously, and love us freely. We would come in faith, nothing doubting. Let thy grace be as much magnified in our salvation, as thy justice was in freely delivering thy Son to die for our sins. We plead His righteousness—his alone. O cast us not away from thy presence! take not thy Holy Spirit from us! But bestow on us all grace: lead us into all truth: stir us up to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: make us to abound in every fruit of the Spirit; and evermore receive us in thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

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XXV.

SALVATION, ONLY BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

ROMANS iii. 20—26.

Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets;

Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

THE more we know of the holiness of God, the more we shall feel our own sinfulness. And the more we feel our own sinfulness, the more we shall see how helpless we are; altogether unable to save ourselves by our own righteousness.

Naturally, however, men know very little of the holiness of God. He has, therefore, given us a law, by which we may understand how holy He is. You know the Law of the Ten Commandments. ..... It would be well, also, for us to read the Fifth Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. There we shall see, that the Law of God touches the heart, as well as our outward actions: the *thought* of foolishness is sin. Our Saviour tells us, that a wanton

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look has the guilt of adultery; and, that an angry, revengeful thought, lodging in our bosom, is the spirit of murder. Who then can tell, how oft he has offended? or who can hope to be saved by his own righteousness? In some things, our lives have been full of sin; and, in all things, our hearts have been ready to conceive iniquity: so that there is none righteous, no, not one.

There is no real difference among men in this: all have sinned. Some, it is true, sin more grossly and openly than others; but who can see all the iniquity of his heart? Therefore it is very dangerous for us to compare ourselves with others, and so try to escape condemnation, by thinking that we are not quite so bad as some others are. We should compare ourselves, not with one another, but with the holy Law of God. By that Law is the knowledge of sin. Then we shall, every one of us, be ready to cry out, "I am the chief of sinners!" We shall all feel that we "have fallen short of the glory of God." We shall confess, that we deserve nothing but hell, and that we are altogether unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

But, blessed be God! there is a way appointed, by which sinners may be reconciled, and accepted into favour with our Heavenly Father. This way (and it is the only way) is through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has done and suffered enough for sinners, to make them, vile and sinful as they are, righteous in the sight of God. This is called, their Justification before God: and,

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to obtain it, they have only to accept that righteousness which Christ has prepared for them, and which God has appointed as the acceptable righteousness for ruined sinners. This righteousness we are to receive by faith. Christ has prepared it: faith in Christ makes it our own. The power of Christ is put forth to save us; and the power of faith must be put forth to receive Him. It is not we that work out this righteousness; for it is already wrought by Christ: all we have to do in this matter, is, to receive it; believing that God has appointed it, and that Christ has wrought it out; and thus, by faith, making it our own.

Can any thing be thought of more wonderful than this—that a man should be saved, not for his own righteousness, but for the righteousness of another? Yet this is the doctrine of Scripture: this is the method of God's love, manifested through Christ. This is the mystery of grace: we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The righteousness, then, by which the believer is saved, is not, in the least degree, any goodness of his own. If you had been ever so strict and honest; if you had been the best member of society, and very patient under all your sufferings; it is not all this, that can save you. We must not, for one moment, think of coming to God, trusting in our own righteousness. All must come alike, as sinners: all, without one exception; the most decent, and the most vile; all alike, in this.

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Can any thing set forth the wisdom and power, the justice and mercy of God, more than this? Can any thing be thought more difficult, than to find out a way by which God could show himself just, and yet pardon sinners? But, behold the way, prepared through Christ! The justice of God is satisfied, because Jesus bears the punishment of our iniquities. And his mercy towards sinners is displayed, in pardoning them, accepting them, and treating them as if they were righteous, because they believe in Jesus; in whom God freely justifies the ungodly, when they turn to him with true repentance and lively faith.

Let me then most seriously ask, Whether you have understood this doctrine? and, still more, Whether you have taken this one great step in religion? Have you cast yourself on Christ for salvation? Have you accounted all your best deeds to be no better than filthy rags? Have you received this righteousness, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe?" Without this, you cannot enjoy true peace; for it is the only way of standing before God, and of meeting the Judge with any hope of favour. We must come to him, with this on our lips, and in our hearts—"I am a lost sinner; but I believe that, for me, Christ died." Whoever can say this from his heart, with a faith which worketh by love, is saved through grace. "But he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

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But, if you have learned truly to believe in Christ, you will never desire to continue in sin. On the contrary, you will hate the sins which crucified your Lord and Master. Love to Jesus, will cast out the love of sin. Though you will put no trust in any thing you can do, to save you, still you will take this for the law of your life—"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He believes, loves, and obeys.

God grant to us this living faith, this membership in Christ; this love of holiness; and, with it, the hope of glory!

PRAYER.

O Lord, and Heavenly Father, from Thee cometh down every good and perfect gift. Thine was the gift of thy dear Son, to be the propitiation for our sins: and thine, also, is the gift of a saving faith, whereby we may be enabled to apprehend thy Son, our Saviour. Since thou hast revealed him to us, as the Lord our Righteousness, make us to be no longer faithless, but believing. We would clothe ourselves with this white raiment, which thou hast freely offered us, to cover the shame and defilement of our guilty souls. Let thy Holy Spirit work in us the work of faith, with power; that we may behold our innumerable sins laid on Jesus; and all the merit of his precious blood-

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shedding accounted to us; that, as He died for us, so we may live in Him.

And now unto thee, O Father, who didst freely give up thy Son for us all; and to thee, Blessed Redeemer, who didst pour out thy soul unto death, and ever livest to make intercession for transgressors; and to thee, most Holy Spirit, who dost begin in thy people the good work, and dost seal them unto the day of redemption: to Thee, thou glorious Jehovah, three Persons in one God, we ascribe all glory and praise, now and for ever.

XXVI.

FREE GRACE, LEADING TO HOLINESS.

ROMANS vi. 1—6.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

MEN, who do not understand the doctrine of Justification by faith, or, in other words, the doctrine of free grace, are very ready to make objections against it. St. Paul met with these objectors, and found it very necessary to answer them. But, before

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we consider what he said to them, let us look fully into the doctrine itself.

The doctrine is thus clearly laid down by St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of this Epistle, the fourth verse to the eighth: he says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Here the Apostle is very particular in describing that method, which man in his ignorance would think the right way to be saved; namely, That if a person tries to do his best, God will accept his endeavours and his works, as far as they go, and make allowance for all that is wanting. In this way, men would earn their salvation by their own works, few as they are; and the reward would be reckoned to them, not as a matter of free gift, but as a matter of right; because they think that, on the whole, they are good enough for God to be satisfied with. This, I believe, is the way in which many set about being religious; but it is the wrong way. And therefore a common saying, which I have heard from some persons, is altogether a false step to begin religion with. They say, "All my creed is, Do good, and you shall have good."

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Now, the danger of this notion is great: it opposes God's plan, and is totally unfit for mankind. None do good works, worthy of salvation. All are sinners before God. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Who, then, can, by his good deeds, earn heaven? Who can say, that eternal life is the wages of his good conduct? One sin deserves eternal death; "for the wages of sin is death." So then, if we would reach that happy place above, we must go thither by free grace; we must enter, as having no right in ourselves: "for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Look again at those words of St. Paul: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Now this is the doctrine at which men stumble; although every man living ought to bless God for it, both in this life, and to all eternity. "How?" say they; "shall a man that worketh not have a better chance of salvation than one who works? Will God justify the ungodly for their faith, and not accept the few good works that another poor creature tried to do? At this rate, Faith is every thing, and Works are nothing!"

To all this, let me answer: "You have well said, that faith is every thing, and works are nothing." But mind, in what sense this is said. It is in the matter of our *acceptance* before God. We are *accepted* through our faith in Christ, because faith receives and honours Christ. Faith joyfully confesses that Christ, by his precious blood-shedding,

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has obtained the pardon of all our sins, and reconciliation with God. Both St. Paul and St. James agree in the necessity of good works, springing from faith: but the justification of the ungodly does not spring from any worthiness, either in our faith or in our works; all comes from Christ, of whom faith lays fast hold. The humbled believer thankfully accepts the righteousness of Christ: that righteousness covers him, and hides all his sins. So then, in the justifying of the ungodly, faith *is* every thing, and works are nothing.

But, think you that the believer in Jesus is an idler? Just the contrary. His faith "worketh by love." If he had a faith without works, it would be a dead faith. But he desires to "abound in every good word and work." Only now he works, not for wages, but from love.

We sometimes hear it objected, "Oh, then, if only we have faith, we may live as we please." In St. Paul's days this objection was made; which he answers thus. He supposes foolish men to say, "We may continue in sin, that grace may abound." As if they had said, "However much we sin, we are sure to be pardoned: the more sin, the more grace." The moment St. Paul hears this, he immediately cries out, with holy anger—God forbid! It *cannot* be: *must not* be. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The thought of allowing sin any how, would ruin man, and dishonour God. Know ye not that true believers are one with Christ; and, as Christ rose from the dead,

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so do they arise from their former sinful living?—Do not deceive yourselves. If you have a saving faith, you will not any more fashion yourself after the former lusts in your ignorance. You will put off the old man, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Think, then, and carefully examine; first, whether you have saving faith in Christ; and next, whether you bring forth the fruit of good works, from love to Him. Faith, and works, must both be in you, if you would be saved. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. If you love this Saviour, show your love, by bearing the cross with Him. Crucify the old man. You know what the old man is: it is your old Self, your former Self: it is what we all are, before we believe unto salvation. Every man, before he has a living faith, is "a body of sin": but when he is brought to life by Christ, he no more serves sin. I would leave with you, then, these two most weighty questions:—"Have you saving faith in Christ?"—and, "Are you daily crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts?"

PRAYER.

O God, who hast reconciled us unto thyself by the precious blood of thy dear Son; we would thankfully acknowledge that we are not our own. We are bought with a price: we are bound by all thy commands; and yet more by the gracious terms

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of thy Covenant, to present ourselves unto thee a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ.

Let thy Holy Spirit, Lord, write on our minds the law of love, that we may with our whole hearts keep thy commandments, and delight to do thy will. As we have yielded our members as instruments of sin, so now may they be made instruments of holiness, unto thee, our God. By the purifying influences of thy Spirit, mortify in us all carnal affections; fill us with holy resolutions; and enable us, effectually, to fulfil our vows to thee. Let love, and joy, and peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, with meekness and temperance, and every fruit of thy Spirit, abound in our life and conversation. And thus prepare us, O Lord, for the everlasting enjoyment of thy Blessed Self in heaven above, through the merits of our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ!

XXVII.

A HEAVENLY MIND, AND HOLY LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1—7.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

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. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:
In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.

THE true believer in Christ is as a man risen from the dead, and come to life: for by faith he obtains a new life from Christ. He is united to Christ; and what Christ is, that he is. Before his conversion, he was dead in trespasses and sins; but the Spirit of Christ, entering into him, has made him a living man.

O do you, who call yourself a Christian, examine whether your heart has been thus changed! For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

It was by Almighty Power that Jesus burst open the grave, and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is by the same Almighty Power that a sinner is raised from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness.

And now his affections ascend towards heaven; for Christ, his Lord and Life, is there. He loves to draw nigh to him, in supplications and prayers. With the eye of faith he beholds the bleeding Lamb; he views the multitude of angels and saints around the throne; he wonders at the mystery of redeeming love; he begins to join in the everlasting song; and is ready to cry out, "Lord, I am thine, and Thou art mine, for ever!"

The most pious Christian is not *always* enjoying these heavenly delights. He is sadly distracted

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with worldly cares, and often hindered by sinful temptations. His soul is sometimes exceedingly heavy; at other times exceedingly foolish. But he desires and tries to set his affections on things above. He often cries out, "Oh, that my Advocate, at God's right hand, would pity my infirmities, and put new life into my soul!" Nor does he cry in vain.

But his life is safely hidden with Christ in God. It is a treasure, of which no enemy can rob him, so long as he dwells close to Christ. Therefore the Saviour has said, "Abide in me, and I in you. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Jesus therefore hears our prayers; and is ready to give us that Spirit of love, which is the glory of heaven itself. Again he says, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

This life of faith, and this spirit of love, are not always seen by the believer, in himself, at once. They are sometimes hidden, even from himself. Christ, indeed, is always near; but the believer does not always perceive him near. But when temptations to sin come in his way, he has great need to stir up his faith and love: for his business is, to mortify all sin. The "members which are upon the earth," mean, the whole old man. He has to deny all sinful affections, and to be very careful in managing even his lawful affections. He is daily putting off the old man, and putting on

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the new man. This cannot be done without the help of Christ. The very smallest victory over sin can be gained only by faith. When he contends against sin, then it is that he feels Christ most needful to him.

What a grievous thing it is, to think that we have some time walked and lived in those sinful lusts and worldly pleasures, which the Apostle here condemns. Let us read the account of them over again, with shame and abhorrence . . . . . And have we *now* escaped from the pollutions, that are in the world through lust? And are we *now* living for heaven, and for eternity?

Oh, the terrible state of those who are still children of disobedience! Think of those words of Christ, "The wrath of God abideth on them!"

Think, too, of the Christian's blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall believers be with Him in glory. They shall ascend to heaven: they shall enter into peace: no sin shall be there; no, not even temptation to sin. "The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who art exalted to the right hand of thy Father, to receive gifts, even for the rebellious; mercifully hear and answer our prayer, while we ask for the promised influences of

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thy Holy Spirit. Pardon all our sins: renew our inner man: dwell Thou in our hearts, by faith: give to us the hidden life, which comes from Thee; and let thy Holy Spirit within us be as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life!

Sanctify, O Lord, every affection of our souls! May we love thee above all things: and in all things which thou givest us for our good, may we still love thee supremely. Cause us to walk all the day long in a holy fear of offending thee; that no unholy temper, or sinful practice of ours, may ever grieve thy Holy Spirit, or cause him to depart from us. Cheer our dim sight with a bright hope of those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Let the peace of God rule in our hearts; and let the spirit of prayer and praise abound within us. So, Blessed Jesus, dwell in us, and walk in us, that, when we are called hence, we may welcome thy voice in our dying moments. And while thou sayest, Behold, I come quickly; cause our departing spirits humbly and gladly to answer Thee, Even so, come Lord Jesus!

XXVIII.

OUR COMPASSIONATE SAVIOUR.

HEBREWS iv. 14—16.

Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

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For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE office of the Jewish High Priest was, to offer up sacrifices to God for the sins of the people; and this he did daily. Besides this, once in the year he used to enter into a place, called "The Holy of Holies;" and there he made a most solemn atonement for the sins of the whole congregation.

By these actions, he showed forth the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who once for all, on the cross, shed his precious blood for the sins of the whole world. Having done this, He passed into the heavens. There, in that Holy of Holies, He is set down on the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us.

Let me ask now, in his own words, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Do *you* own Jesus for your Lord, and your God? Do you feel what a perishing sinner you are, without Him? Do you tremble to think, that the load of your sins would sink you into hell, unless you lay hold of the hand which He stretches out to save you? Do you love this Saviour; and are you laying it to heart to live to His glory? Unless you can say "Yes," to these questions, you have no part in Christ.

But if you do come to Him as a broken-hearted sinner; if you do believe in Him as your redeeming God; if you do pray to Him; and if you

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endeavour to live to His glory, then Jesus is your Friend. And He is such a friend, that you will never find another like Him, to help and comfort you.

Jesus, when on earth, suffered hunger and thirst, cold and heat, weariness and sleeplessness: He suffered shame and sorrow, temptation from Satan, and contradiction from sinners: nay, He suffered agony and death, that he might save us from the bitter pains of eternal death. Now that he is risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, He still feels for all true believers. He calls them the members of his body. He is the Head, and feels what every member bears.

Are you suffering great pain, and sickness, and weakness of body? Think what Jesus suffered on the cross for you! If you could only, by faith, see the agonies which He endured, to save you, you would never think that you have one pain too many. Nay, you would be thankful for pain, if it brought you nearer to the bosom of your Saviour.

Do you suffer from pinching poverty? Remember the account which Jesus gave of his own life; and be comforted, to know that He feels for all your distresses. He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."—And has He put into our lips the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and will He not give us bread? Alas! we pray with too little faith in His love.

Are you deserted by friends, and left alone? So

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was Jesus. But He says, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." And you may say the same; feeling, by faith, that Jesus is with you. He is a real Friend; a never-failing Friend.

Is your soul vexed by the scoffs of the ungodly, who ridicule, or persecute you, because you love Christ? Then, look unto Jesus, and consider Him who "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." He is the Good Shepherd, and will not suffer the wolf to devour his tender lambs.

Are you mourning for the death of those you love? Read the eleventh chapter of St. John's Gospel, and see how the Saviour feels for those that are bereaved. When Mary and Martha mourned for their brother Lazarus, "Jesus wept."

Are you tempted? Jesus also was tempted, "yet without sin." He knows all your infirmities, both of body and soul; and "is able to succour them that are tempted."

Only come to Him with earnest, believing prayer. The way to the throne of grace is open night and day. Come to Him when you are at your very worst. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When temptation presses you sore, yet fight on, in the strength of Christ; and sin shall not get the victory over you. When the remembrance of past sins sinks you very low, cry to Jesus; and He will stretch forth his arm to deliver your soul from the nethermost hell. Even when you are dying, He can, and will, give comfort to the contrite and

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and humble. You may say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Come, then, to Jesus! not only when it is well with you, but when you are at the very worst. Come boldly! and you shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

PRAYER.

Behold us, O blessed Jesus! drawing nigh unto thee, and lifting up the voice of our humble supplications, trusting in thy Name alone. Bow down thine ear, while we plead all that thou didst suffer, in our nature, to bring us unto God. Though thou wast rich, yet thou didst become poor, that we, through thy poverty, might be made rich. Thou didst know hunger and thirst, toil and weariness and painfulness: thou wast a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; deserted by friends, and enduring the contradiction of sinners against thyself, even unto death. Thou didst bear the temptations of Satan, and the hidings of thy Father's face. What sorrow of ours can be compared to thine? Ours are light afflictions, and but for a moment: and they are shared by Thee.

Yet, O our pitying Saviour! to our frail nature every chastening is, for the present, grievous. Thou knowest our frame: thou rememberest that we are but dust. Suffer us not to be swallowed up of over-much sorrow, nor to faint in the day of

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adversity. Stand by us, and help us. Give to us the consolations of thy Spirit, and the comfort of thy love. Be present with us in the furnace of affliction; and say to our sinking hearts, "Lo, I am with you! Bestow upon us more abundantly the spirit of grace and of supplication: that in all our troubles we may make our request known unto thee; and feel evermore, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, is able to keep our hearts and minds, calmly rejoicing, and safely established in thee, Christ Jesus our Lord.

XXIX.

VISIT TO THE AFFLICTED.

HEBREWS xii. 5—13.

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

THIS beautiful passage of Scripture teaches us how to bear afflictions patiently, and even to bless God for them. When I sit near any one who is deeply afflicted, I have need to pray for grace, that I may speak to him wisely, and comfortably. You are now suffering sorrow: let us ask, What is the voice of God, in this visitation?

Observe, then, that the words of the Apostle are addressed to the children of God; so that the first thing you should inquire into, is, Whether *you* are of that number?

Many sick and suffering people say—"I hope I am a child of God: if suffering makes a child of God, sure enough I am one. I hope God is not punishing me as an enemy: I know I am a sinner; but I hope he will make allowance for me, on account of my sufferings. Surely he must pity me at last, if he lays such heavy sufferings upon me now. And as my trials are so great in this life, I hope I shall be better off in another world. Still, it is impossible not to complain sometimes, and to think that God deals rather hardly with me."

Now, these are the thoughts that come into the mind of some persons, when they are afflicted. Is it your way of thinking, my friend? If so, there must be something wrong. I should be unwilling to cause you sorrow upon sorrow; but I entreat you

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to let me speak faithfully on this question, "What is it to be a child of God?"

1. The true child of God never thinks of paying off the debt of sin with his sufferings. He feels that his sins deserve infinite and eternal punishment: he does not suppose that his own sufferings can do away the dreadful guilt of his sins. He knows that even the sufferings of hell cannot pay off the sinner's debt, though he goes on suffering for ever and ever. Neither does sorrow for sin do any good, unless it leads us to Christ for pardon, and to implore the gift of a new heart.

2. The true child of God is further instructed in this blessed truth, that the curse denounced against all his sins has already been borne by Jesus the Son of God, who died upon the cross.

3. Therefore, he receives Christ by faith. He is united to Christ by faith. He has pardon, peace, and the gift of a new heart, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. His own sufferings have nothing to do with gaining that pardon: the price of his redemption is already paid down, by the most precious blood-shedding and death of Jesus Christ. If we attempt to add any thing to Christ's sacrifice, we destroy it. Christ must save, and Christ alone.

Why, then, you ask, are afflictions sent to the children of God, when their Father loves them so tenderly?

1. They are sent to bring our past sins to our remembrance; and, to make us watchful against

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present temptations, and the unsuspected evil of our hearts. "Let us search, and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

2. They are sent also to keep us near to Christ; that we may depend on Him alone; that we may love him more, setting our affections on things above, and longing to be with him for ever in heaven; where the children of God will be made entirely like their Heavenly Father; for there we shall see him as he is. Affliction is the furnace, in which the gold is purified: faith is made stronger, and love more pure and fervent, by means of this furnace.

3. Afflictions also are sent, to teach us to pity others. The afflicted child of God may say, "How many are there that have no Comforter, as I have; no Bible; no friendly Visitor; no knowledge of the Saviour: living and dying without God, and without hope! Father of mercies, have pity on them! Show me, what can I do for them? Tell me what to speak to some of them! Teach me to pray for them all! I must not be so selfish, as to think only of my own sufferings. All the world is suffering around me: I know where peace may be found; multitudes know nothing of the way of peace. Oh, that I had more of the pitying mind of Christ!"

Now, these are the chief uses of sorrow: and there is also this use—Affliction sometimes is the first thing that brings us to God. And is not this a blessed use of our troubles? So the Psalmist says,

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"Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

But you are weary: we will speak more of this another time. Enough has been said at present, I hope, to lead you to pray that your affliction may be blest to you, so that you may say, with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

PRAYER.

Wherefore should a living man complain, O Lord! a man, for the punishment of his sins? We acknowledge our transgressions: we desire to humble ourselves, and be sorry for our sins. But, blessed be thy Name! the condemnation of sin is tken away, Christ having become a curse for us. Grant, that, being reconciled unto thee, through Him, we may walk before thee as dear children; and receive all thy chastenings, as tokens of a Father's love. Work in our souls more humility, watchfulness, and dependence on thee. Hold us by thy hand continually, and keep us near to thee. Take away the remaining dross out of our hearts; and cause our faith and good works to shine before men, who see our tribulations, and our hope in Thee, to the glory of thy holy Name.

Endue us, also, with the tender and merciful spirit of Him, who came to visit this miserable world, and to give up his life a ransom for many. Cause us, like Jesus, to weep over sinners, who are far from thee. Pity all that are in misery; all prisoners and captives; all widows and orphans; the

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stranger, and the outcast; the sick, and the dying. Have mercy, O Lord, upon the nations that are yet sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Send forth to them thy light and truth; and be evermore with thy faithful servants, who are gone preaching in distant lands the unsearchable riches of Christ. Deliver them from every temptation: comfort them in every affliction: strengthen them for their work: favour them with success; and finally crown them with the crown of glory, which fadeth not away.

We ask these mercies, for ourselves and others, in the name of our adorable Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord.

XXX.

VISIT TO THE AFFLICTED. (*Continued.*)

HEBREWS xii. 5—11. (See page 130.)

How kindly does the Lord speak to his afflicted children, when he says, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

It is to be lamented, however, that even the children of God do not always lay fast hold of those comforts, which properly belong to them. When afflictions come upon them, they are seized with a sudden confusion: they do not at once perceive

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that it is the gentle rod of their Father; and, by their distress, they show that they have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto us as unto children.

It is also to be observed, that there are these two corruptions of our heart drawn out, and brought to view, by our afflictions. If the chastening be light, we are ready to despise it: we think we can bear it by ourselves, and that it is scarcely worth attending to: this is our pride. But when God strikes harder and harder, our spirit faints under his rebuke: this is our unbelief. First, we hold out against God, as long as we can; and next, when we can endure no longer, we murmur, faint, and sink into despondency.

Oh, what a thing is man! What a poor creature is even the best child of God, when he is for a moment forgetful of his Heavenly Father!

If, my friend, you know Christ as your Saviour, you will say, at the first approach of sorrow, "This affliction must not be lost upon me: it is for my profiting: at present it seems light: but I will bless the Lord for giving me warning." Then again, my friend, if you are suffering sorrow upon sorrow, but can look up to Christ as your compassionate Saviour and Comforter, you will pray, from the heart, "Let this affliction, most heavy as it is, press me nearer to Him whom my soul loveth! The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Earthly joys are going away farther and farther: let heavenly consolations

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abound! I would not have my troubles either fewer, or lighter, than God pleases: not because I think that they will take away my sins: Christ alone can do that. But, in the house of mourning, Jesus is more familiar, and friendly, and tender, in applying His promises to my soul. Here I see him, hear him, feel him present, and speak to him more nearly."

It would be most melancholy, to have no afflictions: if we had none, we might then doubt whether we were children of God; "for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not."

Truly, it is one of the kindest things that a wise father can do for his son, to chasten him betimes: and children, that grow up in godliness, will thank their parents for correcting them when they were young; although, in some instances, they may have shown many infirmities, in their way of bringing us up.

But our Heavenly Father, when he chastens us, does it with perfect love, and perfect wisdom. He is like a refiner, sitting by the furnace, purifying the gold. He raises the furnace to its proper heat: he will not consume the gold, but only purges out the dross. Can you not trust His wisdom, faithfulness, and love? O lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees! Think of those who have suffered the deepest afflictions before you, and yet the Lord hath delivered them out of all. "Take, my brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, for an example of

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suffering affliction, and of patience. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Yet, if sorrows are multiplied, and all the dispensations of God seem darker and darker, so that heart and flesh begin to fail; still put thy trust in God. Shut the outward eye to all the things of this world: open the eye of faith, to behold things unseen and eternal. Look far beyond the valley of the shadow of death. O fix thy affections on the kingdom of perfect joy, and peace, and love; where "thy sun shall no more go down; where the Lord shall be thy everlasting light; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

PRAYER.

O thou Father of mercies, and God of all consolation! we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servants. But, alas! how soon do we forget thy favours past, whenever new afflictions come upon us! How soon do we murmur against the Most High, and forget all his loving-kindnesses, as though they were utterly gone for evermore.

Lord, it is our infirmity and our sin, that we are so ready to sink into unbelief; even doubting Thy love! Pardon the sin of this ungrateful spirit; and cast it out, by the gracious influence of thy Holy Spirit. Show to us the things which are freely given unto us in Christ. Thou hast sealed to us the

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covenant of pardon and peace, through His blood. Bestow on us also, for His sake, the spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, Abba, Father! Shed abroad in our hearts thy love: fill us with all joy and peace in believing; and make us to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And whensoever any new tribulation shall come upon us, teach us to cast all our burden upon thee. Look upon our affliction and our pain, and forgive us all our sins. Uphold us with thy free Spirit. Let patience have her perfect work; and do thou perfect that which concerneth us. Father, not our will, but Thine, be done! And raise us at length to thy glorious seat above, where the redeemed of the Lord shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

We ask these great mercies through the prevailing Name of thy dear Son; to whom, with thyself, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, we would ascribe glory in the Church, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE VERSES,

WITH

PRACTICAL AND DEVOTIONAL REFLECTIONS.

In visiting, under ordinary circumstances, the dwellings of the Poor and Afflicted; and likewise in attending the chamber of the Sick and Dying, whether they be rich or poor; there is more liberty, in addressing the conscience, and carrying the Truth home to the heart, than at other times, or in other situations. With this view, these full Selections from Holy Scripture have been made. Each one is followed by some leading remark, some friendly question, or devout ejaculation; designed to assist Visitors in their attempts suitably to impress the minds of the persons whom they may visit.

These Selections are arranged under six heads: and the reason of this will be obvious. For, in order to speak, under God's blessing, to good purpose, that, and that only, should be offered, which suits the real character of the party visited. How dangerous, for example, would it be to administer some of those animating consolations, contained in the sixth section, to persons who, perhaps, are closing a

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life of sin and worldliness, without any correct ideas of their own real state before God! A discriminating mind is peculiarly needed, in those who would deal wisely with the afflicted and the dying: yet this should be accompanied with a tender and prudent spirit, such as may win affection, and not needlesly jar the feelings of the patient. A person, well-read in Scripture, taught by the Holy Spirit, and experimentally acquainted with the workings of his own heart and of divine grace, is the character fitted for visiting and counselling the afflicted. May the Ministers of Christ throughout our land be such! and may they be guided in selecting, for works of mercy, persons like-minded with themselves, having "the mind of Christ"!

The remarks, as will evidently appear, are suitable, variously, both for the healthy and the sick.

I.

PERSONS APPARENTLY LIVING IN IGNORANCE AND SIN.

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Numbers xxxii. 23.

The sinner for a long time forgets his sins: but at last some witness brings him to light; or, some disease falls on him, and death comes near; or, his conscience is so burdened, that he cannot help confessing. God saw us from the first, and all is written

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in His book. Where shall we seek pardon, but from this very Saviour, whom we have offended?

"Lord, at thy feet, ashamed, I lie;
Upward I dare not look;
Pardon my sins, before I die,
And blot them from thy book!"

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." *Psalm* x. 4.

We proudly live, as if life were our own. Have you not spent many years without the least Religion — nay, despising and mocking religious people?

Lord, pardon the proud rebel, whom thou hast now brought low! For Jesu's sake, forgive me; and enter now into this heart, which is not worthy to receive thee!

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good." *Psalm* xiv. 1.

Was not this the secret of all our ungodliness? We loved sin; we hated God; we wished there was no God; we believed infidel books and men, who told us, that there is no God, and no hell. Now, we feel that God is punishing, and hell is almost begining to burn, in our consciences.

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Lord! can sinners so abominable, and so corrupt, ever be saved? O show thyself to us, Almighty to save, even the chief of sinners, through Jesus!

"For thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great!" *Psalm* xxv. 11.

Great, indeed, is my sin! The very smallest sin, deserving of hell! What then shall I do with my many thousands of sins? Jesus! thy name was so given unto thee, because thou wilt save thy people from their sins: for that Name's sake, pardon all mine iniquities!

"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." *Psalm* xc. 8.

Nothing, O Lord, can be hidden from Thee: oftentimes have I sinned in darkness: but the darkness hideth not from Thee! O blot out the sins which now cover me with shame! Accept me for thy dear Son's sake!

"And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." *Proverbs* v. 11—14.

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Oh pitiable sight, to see what sin has wrought! That once-strong body wasting away, and the beautiful face quite gone! What was the beginning of this? Hating the Gospel: laughing at good advisers, and pious Ministers: keeping bad company: greedily drinking-in sin. Is there any hope left for such a wretch?

Jesus, thou art able to save to the uttermost! To thee we commend every mourning sinner: O give poor, lost sinners faith in thee! Suffer not their souls to perish!

"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." *Proverbs* xi. 21.

Gay company often hardens us in sin: drunkards, fornicators, sabbath-breakers, cheats, liars and swearers wish numbers to be sinners like themselves. But we shall die alone, and be judged alone.

Prepare us, Lord, for our last account! We would commune with our own hearts and Thee. How may we break off evil company? How may we have communion with the Holy Spirit? It is only through Jesus.

"At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." *Proverbs* xxiii. 32.

At first, the cup of pleasure was sweet; but, now that pleasure has made a slave of me, the sweet is turning bitter. And, in the end, it must prove a never-dying sting.

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O Almighty Redeemer, pluck the sinner as a brand out of the burning! Give thy Ministers grace to do this, by thy strength!

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." *Isaiah* i. 18.

This is a promise, which reaches to the very worst cases;—to the murderer, whose crimes are blood; the infidel, who has murdered souls; the seducer, who has ruined, perhaps, the body and soul of some unhappy creature; the faithless Preacher, who has blindly led the blind, till many of them have fallen into the ditch.—But why do I speak of such? Even to me, the chief of sinners, is this promise made!

Grant to us, Lord, faith, strong as the promise!

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." *Isaiah* xliii. 25.

Lord, when we remember our many sins, with shame and confusion of face, help us also to look to the bleeding Saviour, who has made an atonement for them all! For His name's sake, remember our iniquities no more, for ever.

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"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" *Ezekiel* xviii. 31.

Since Christ is willing to save me, why am I unwilling to be saved? Lord, from thy Spirit alone can come the desire of this salvation. Incline our hearts to cast away the works of darkness, and to accept the covenant of peace, which Jesus hath sealed with his blood!

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." *Ezekiel* xxxvi. 26.

Oh, the unutterable hardness of this heart; that cannot love; that cannot believe; that cannot melt with godly sorrow! Lord, touch it with thy Spirit! Kindle the love of Jesus in me! Then shall the love of sin depart, and the law of love and holiness be written on my inmost soul.

"Prepare to meet thy God." *Amos* iv. 12.

If now I am almost speechless at the thought of death, how shall I stand at the bar of God? I would thank the Lord for giving me warning. Help me, gracious Saviour, to comprehend the word of reconciliation, offered in the Gospel!

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"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." *Matthew* xi. 28.

Laden with sins, and full of fears!—Is not this my case? Jesus, thou compassionate Saviour and Teacher, deliver me, heal me, draw me, teach me! Make me, like Thyself, meek and lowly in heart!

"I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." *Luke* xv. 10.

Can it be, that one sinner's salvation should cause joy to all the innumerable company of angels? Yes: for they behold the Father well pleased, the Son glorious in his redeeming love, the Eternal Spirit beginning a work, for eternity! May all Heaven rejoice, while Jesus visits this one poor soul with his salvation!

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *John* iii. 16.

What was there in sinners, that God could love? Nothing:—but he loved them freely. What could he give, greater than his Son? And Him he spared not. Lord, let this be the anchor of our souls, our hope sure and steadfast! We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

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"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." *John* v. 40.

How can we be so ungrateful to this Saviour? And, there is no other Saviour!

"What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *Acts* xvi. 30, 31.

Oh, if we might live our life over again, how would we labour to save our souls!—So think many, when death stares them in the face. And yet Salvation is near to them, if they could but lay hold of it, by faith.

Lord, thou hast given to us thy Son, to die for our sins: bestow on us, also, the gift of thy Spirit, that we may believe; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith!

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 *Corinthians* vi. 9—11.

If the unrighteous cannot enter heaven, how can

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I enter? Lead me, O Lord, by that new and living way, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus; and renew my heart and affections by thy Spirit, that I may be prepared to relish the joys and the holiness of heaven!

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead: and Christ shall give thee light."

Ephesians v. 14.

Very dark is this soul of mine, by nature; and have I not been slumbering on the very brink of hell? I need a rousing, and an alarming voice, to wake me: and this voice speaks of Christ, as the giver of light. Spirit of Christ, create light in my soul!

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

1 *Timothy* i. 15.

Till we receive Christ by faith, and till we are united to Him in love, nothing else is worthy of a single thought. How safely may we commit our souls to Him, and venture all for Him! for his name is, "Faithful and True."

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Hebrews vii. 25.

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Till the sinner is in hell, Jesus offers to save him. —You are not yet in hell:—then, look to Jesus: cry to him: say, "Lord, save me! I perish!"

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 *John* i. 7.

Look at the matter thus: The whole history of your heart and life is summed up in one word, Sin: and the whole of the Gospel is summed up in this one word, Love. It was Love that brought the Son of God from heaven, and made him willing to shed his blood for your pardon. Then, believe in Him. It was not for a little sin, or for a few sins, that He died on Calvary. His blood cleanseth us from *all* sin.

II.

PERSONS, KNOWING THE GOSPEL, BUT NOT LIVING ACCORDING TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"

Job xxvii. 8—10.

A dreadfully offensive name is this, "Hypocrite"! Perhaps you feel yourself insulted by it. Well: let me leave you by yourself, alone: but I beseech you to consider, that if you were the most-approved

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professor in all the religious world, it will avail you nothing, if you are a stranger to secret prayer. You have need to cry, "Lord, gather not my soul with Ananias and Sapphira!"

"But unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." *Psalm* l. 16, 17.

To be able to talk warmly about the Covenant of grace, while sin is secretly loved or practised, is one of Satan's grand delusions. Confess now, O self-deceiver! while you were wearing God's livery, were you not Satan's servant all the time? If your heart condemns you, say nothing, but go to private prayer. Implore pardon: ask of God to create in you a new heart.

"He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." *Proverbs* xxix. 1.

Have you had many warnings? Has sickness touched you? Does conscience whisper? Has a pious father had trouble with you? Has a pious mother wept over you? Did the Preacher seem to describe your case? And yet—the heart hardened? Are you not afraid to read the whole of this verse over again?

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"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Isaiah xxxiii. 14.

Sinners in Zion, I suppose, are they who have possessed religious privileges, and yet made no good use of them; or, if they joined the religious party, yet have not had the "oil of grace" in their hearts.

If this be your case, go and buy this oil, the grace of Christ, before the door is shut. It is to be had without money and without price; but if you do not seek and obtain it now, no price can buy your lost soul out of hell.

"With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

Ezekiel xxxiii. 3.

It is quite evident, that many who are loud in praising particular Preachers, Books, or Doctrines, are yet wedded to this world. Its wealth, its display, its opinion, its enjoyments, choke the word.

The love of money may be felt as strongly about a small sum, as about a thousand pounds.

The Lord usually ordains, that his best servants should have very little of this world—either its wealth or favour. The world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world.

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"Every one, that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
Matthew vii. 26, 27.

No comment can make these sayings of our Blessed Lord plainer than they are. We had better turn them into prayer.

O our Divine Redeemer, who hast made us to be hearers; make us also doers of thy word! Show us what manner of men we are; guilty, perishing and helpless. Draw us to thyself; and work in us the work of faith and love, with power; that we may be delivered from sin and death; that thy Spirit may abide in us; and that we may be wholly thine, now in this life, and to all eternity!

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."
Luke xii. 47.

Is not this reasonable? But if so, what can an ungodly professor of the Gospel expect? yea, an ungodly *hearer* of the Gospel? Unless he repents, every word he hears, is one stripe more, for all eternity. Let us fear and tremble: let us avoid a hearing, talking Religion. O Thou, who alone

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canst give it, give to us, thou Holy Spirit, the Religion of the heart!

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

Luke xiii. 25—27.

The Master of the house will rise *but once*, to shut to the door: for it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the Judgment.

Lord, enable us to guard against this dreadful snare—the praise of men; especially the praise of good men; who cannot know our hearts, as Thou knowest them. Visit our souls with the presence of thy sanctifying Spirit, that we may not be contented with mere profession, but may approve ourselves in thy sight, through Jesus Christ!

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." *John* xv. 2.

So, then, there are branches that seem to be growing on the Vine: perhaps, too, they have green

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leaves: but they do not bear fruit. When the pruning-knife comes, such branches will be cast forth, withered and burned.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 *Cor.* xiii. 5.

The grand point to be inquired, is, "How we stand with regard to Christ." Not, mere examination of Self, separately; nor yet, mere knowledge of Christ, separately. But, "Am I in Christ, and Christ in me? Am I united to Him, by faith? Is that faith a true one, known by the fruits of love and active holiness? Are Christ, and myself, One?" —Nothing but the Holy Spirit, enlightening our eyes, can make this examination a faithful one.

O Spirit of the Living God, search us, and reveal to our inquiring hearts, who, and what we are! If we are not one with Christ, show us what is the evil that keeps us from Christ. Display to us our hateful love of sin and of the world; our ungrateful unbelief; the vanity and deceitfulness of our minds; our alienation from thee, and the idols that are set up in our hearts. If we are thine, let thy Spirit witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God!

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"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." *James* ii. 17.

So early was Antinomianism found in the Church. That it still remains in the Church, is owing to the subtlety of the Devil, the extreme deceitfulness of the human heart, and our desperate love of sin.

If you did not love sin, would you yield to it? If you do love it, can you be Christ's?

"All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and heart." *Rev.* ii. 23.

The persecutions, that fall upon the Church of Christ, prove who are faithful, and who not. Afflictions and severe sicknesses, and the approach of death, show us the same concerning ourselves. Affliction is the furnace, and shows whether our heart be gold and dross mixed together, or dross without any gold.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." *Rev.* iii. 1.

Such names, as the following, a man may have—"A Christian; a baptized person; an eminent Gospel-professor; a leading character; an invaluable Teacher, Visitor, Speaker, &c."—and yet, either his graces may have been going to decay; or, there may have been, all the while, no real grace at all within him. What has been your state?

Is it—"They made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept"?

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III.

PERSONS, APPARENTLY SELF-RIGHTEOUS, AND SELF-SATISFIED.

"Behold, I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." *Job* xl. 4.

Where shall I place myself among the servants of God? Above Job, or below him? If I come in any degree near him, it must be, to confess, from the heart, "I abhor myself."

O Lord, reveal to me, by thy Spirit, how holy thou art! how thou didst not spare even thine own Son, when he stood betwixt Thee and my sins! Then, I shall abhor myself.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." *Proverbs* xiv. 12.

Then, let me suspect my own understanding. Human reason cannot find the way to heaven: mere human wisdom cannot even understand the way, laid down in the Bible.—Have you received the gift of the Spirit, in answer to fervent, humble, believing prayer? Oh, beware lest you should be walking the road to death, with an open Bible before you, but a Bible not prayed over!

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"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." *Proverbs* xxx. 12.

Not washed in the blood of Jesus; because you are not thoroughly humbled, so as to feel your need of Him. Not sanctified by the Spirit, and not made a new creature; because you fancy you are such, sufficiently, already.

And does the spirit of contempt rise sometimes in your mind? Do you despise, or affect to pity, the "enthusiasm," as you call it, of those who truly are born of God? This is no hopeful mark of your state.

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" *Isaiah* xliv. 20.

This is said of idolaters: but it is not a whit less true of those who idolize Self, and build on any righteousness of their own, for acceptance with God. It is a miserable interpretation of the Gospel, worse than Paganism, that sends a man to Self.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart: I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." *Jeremiah* xvii. 9, 10.

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Such is the picture of man's heart, as drawn by God himself. Some persons have endeavoured to explain the words away, as being too severe: but this only serves to prove the very thing the words say; namely, that the heart *is* deceitful *above all things*. The heart would rather be deceived, than know the worst of itself.

Say now, Do *you* love the Truth? Do you like to be told, fairly and honestly, what the Truth is, and what you are? Do you not try to slip away from plain dealing? Do you not try to smother the convictions of your own mind?

When you behold Jesus, the wise Physician, offering to heal this diseased heart, will you not let Him tell you, how diseased it is? If he came, only upbraiding you, you might be hardened against him. But he comes, declaring, "I will take away the heart of stone, and will give you an heart of flesh." Suffer him, then, to break your heart: entreat him to do so: it will be well for you, in the end.

"If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" *Matthew* vi. 23.

Confident, that you are in the right in your religious opinions!—But, (suffer me to ask,) were they gained by prayer, as well as study? If not, all is wrong.

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"God be merciful to me a sinner!" *Luke* xviii. 13.

This is the prayer to be used, not now and then, but constantly. In answer to this prayer, offered through Jesus, God justifies the ungodly. It is a prayer for the lips of the holiest saint.

Whoever prays this prayer, will not despise others: he will be too broken-hearted to do that.

How merciful is God, to furnish us with so short a prayer; easy to be remembered, by the ignorant, the sick and dying!

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *Luke* xviii. 14.

As this is the rule, according to which God deals with men; so is it the rule according to which men should deal with God. We see what we are to have, when we exalt ourselves, and when we humble ourselves.

"I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet." *Romans* vii. 7.

St. Paul, before his conversion, was perfectly satisfied with himself; and his friends were more than satisfied with him. Neither he, nor they, understood the Law, in which they gloried, and by which they expected to be saved. As soon as the Spirit of God caused the Apostle to understand the

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words, "Thou shalt not covet," he renounced all hope of saving himself. So shall we, when we know our own desperate corruption of heart. We shall welcome the doctrine of free grace, and desire only to be "found in Christ."

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 *Peter* v. 5.

What can that man expect, who will not allow Jesus, the Redeemer, to perform his own work? It is the work of Jesus alone to pardon, justify and sanctify a sinner. If the sinner intermeddle, he must expect to find God thwarting, perplexing, and confounding him for his presumption. If the sinner will implore grace, as a free gift, he shall receive it; and grace for grace.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. *Revelation* iii. 17, 18.

O self-satisfied man! didst thou but know, of

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thyself, what Christ knows of thee, how wouldest thou go, like a blind man, asking some one to lead thee by the hand; or like a beggar, asking alms, and living by charity from day to day!

That Christ should counsel such, is like His condescending manner. He is all condescension and kindness. Oh, that he would give us grace to follow His counsel! But it will cost us many a struggle of our naturally proud hearts.

IV.

PERSONS, APPARENTLY IN A STATE OF BACKSLIDING AND DEPARTURE FROM GOD.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Deuteronomy iv. 29.

To reflect, how near you once thought yourself to God, and now how far you are gone from Him, is enough to break the heart!

Still, if you implore grace to turn with all your heart and soul, he will bring back the wandering sheep.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." *Psalm* xxxii. 3.

Sin, when we will not confess and forsake it, burdens the heart, till it is ready to burst. When we reflect on what God's own dear Son suffered

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for our sins, no wonder that the burden should be heavy enough to sink us, day by day, deeper and deeper. Sullenness, added to sin, makes it so intolerable, that the spirits pine away and languish under it. Repentance is the first gleam of sunshine. The perfect day comes on, when, by faith, we cast all our burden on the Lord. Jesus is our noon-day Sun of righteousness.

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." *Psalm* li. 11, 12.

The froward child murmurs at punishment, and smarts under the rod: still, his spirit rises in resentment. But when he finds himself separated from his father, and from the family he really loves, his heart goes down. He cannot complain of this treatment; and he keenly feels it. When he is re-admitted, he hangs his head.

So, O Lord, we lie abashed before Thee! Never shall we regain our freedom and frankness of heart, till thou, by thy Holy Spirit, shalt freely restore it.

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly." *Psalm* lxxxv. 8.

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The Backslider plays the fool, more unpardonably than an unconverted sinner: for he grieves that Holy Spirit, who has been specially gracious to him.

Lord, we hear thy message of peace, and thy warning against relapses into sin. Make us as deeply concerned to obtain restraining grace, as pardoning grace.

"Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Psalm xciv. 17—20.

Are we not walking on the edge of a precipice; where a single slip of the foot may hurl us to the bottom, and dash us to pieces?

Lord, we mourn before thee, that we have trifled with the small beginnings of sin. We bless thee, for recovering us, as in a moment. If the first thought was checked; if the wandering eye stopped; if the hasty tongue paused; if the proud imagination faded away;—if prayer, purity, meekness and humility were restored to our souls, they were the free gift of thy Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!"

"For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and

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he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." *Isaiah* lvii. 17, 18.

God marks the backslider: he leaves him for a while to his own heart: then smites: then heals: then comforts. That he should comfort, would be too much to believe, did not the Lord assure us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." *Jeremiah* ii. 19.

The backslider needs only to be left by God, and he will make himself perfectly wretched.

"Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me, days without number." *Jeremiah* ii. 32.

Yes: such vanities too often fill up our time. The delights of conversation, the ornaments of dress, the preparations for company, the merest compliments of the world, ravish our silly souls. Alas! how easily, in this way, may unwatchful

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believers glide into the neglect of private prayer! "Days without number." Think on this; and let conscience bear witness. Think, what is lost by neglecting, straitening, or hurrying, secret devotions.

"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

Jeremiah iii. 22.

Immediately to return, the moment conscience upbraids us with sin and with departure from God; immediately to close with the gracious offers of the Covenant, the moment the invitation sounds in our ears—this is the best course for the backslider. In this respect, the first thought is the right thought: "I will arise, and go unto my Father." But, to do this, we have need of more than human resolution: we need the influences of the Holy Spirit, to cast out our pride and obstinacy, our indifference and sloth, our vain excuses, our lingering love of sin.

"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

Jeremiah iv. 14.

O believer!—if, indeed, thou deservest that title, after so long a departure from the Living God—yet now, immediately, go to that Fountain, which is

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opened for sin and for uncleanness. There wash, and be clean. Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. But art thou yet so much in love with sin, as to give it a lodging in thy breast, one day, or one night longer? God forbid, for Jesu's sake!

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God! Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." *Jeremiah* xxxi. 18—20.

This bemoaning of himself the backslider experiences, *after* that he is turned, and has come again under instruction. There is a sorrow short of this: a sorrow, that worketh death. Try yourself by these marks: First, Are you willing to take shame to yourself for your rebellions? Next, Do you cast the burden of your guilt upon the Lord Jesus? Thirdly, Are you fitting your neck to the yoke; with indignation against all sin, and

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vehement desires after perfect holiness? Lastly, Do you render all the praise of this to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for their respective offices in the work of your salvation?

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." *Hosea* xiv. 4.

Backslidings are like a long, deep wound, or fretting sore. When healed, they commonly leave a scar behind them.

Lord Jesus, we may well bear the burden of shame, remembering how Thou didst bear the load of our sins. Make us to be of a lowly, loving spirit, when thinking of ourselves, and Thee!

"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."
Jonah ii. 4.

Fear and hope divide the heart of the backslider. He dreads God's displeasure; yet turns to Him, remembering what joy he once had in ordinances: thus he keeps his eye still on God. He knows he can find deliverance and comfort nowhere else.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you

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as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." *Luke* xxii. 31, 32.

As I have sinned, like Peter; grant me, O Lord, Peter's repentance, tenderness of heart, faith, vigilance, and love to his forgiving Master! And let my experience, as well as his, instruct me how to give warning, counsel and encouragement to others.

V.

PERSONS MOURNING, AFFLICTED, AND DOWNCAST IN SPIRIT.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."
Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25.

All our spiritual strength is from God: we are, in ourselves, perfect weakness, even at the best. The strength, which God imparts, is communicated to those who ask for it in the name of Jesus: He then strengthens us with all might, by his Spirit, in the inner man. It is plain, that, to such a strength as this, there is no limit. It is immeasurable, and inexhaustible. This is our comfort in trying times.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him."
Job xiii. 15.

Grant to us, Lord, strong faith, in our greatest extremity of danger, sorrow and suffering! Help

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us, by thy Spirit, not to forget, at such a moment, the Man of sorrows. We can never be lost, if we are found in Him.

"Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." *Psalm* xlii. 8.

"Loving-kindness in the day-time," and "Songs in the night," maintain a goodly fellowship with "Prayer unceasing."

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."
Psalm xlii. 11.

There is such infirmity, sometimes, in the mind, that a person can scarcely be reasoned with: but as long as reason is in exercise, we should appeal to the grounds of faith and hope. "GOD IS LOVE; and He is ALMIGHTY. Then, why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope in Him; and praise Him, even in tears.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." *Psalm* l. 15.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." *Psalm* lv. 22.

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These precepts are very simple, and the promises most encouraging: the difficulty lies in doing what is recommended—disburdening the soul to God. For we sometimes cling to our griefs, as if we would not part with them: this is displeasing to God. We should despatch them out of the way, as soon as possible, by prayer: after which, considering how much work lies before us, we should "up and be doing." Thus may we glorify God in the most trying dispensations.

"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Psalm lxxvii. 6—10.

Could any words better describe the experience of the dejected believer? And what is his consolation? To forget Self, and remember the Saviour. This poring over Self becomes, at length, an utter infirmity of the soul. Look from Self; look to Christ. Remember what proofs of Wisdom, Power, and Love, God has given. The glories of Creation;

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the agonies of the Cross; the new-creating energy of the Spirit:—take up a Chapter that illustrates any of these, and pray or sing over it.

"So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter." *Ecclesiastes* iv. 1.

It has often been found an excellent remedy for sorrow, to begin praying for others; the Heathen, or our unconverted neighbours or relatives; prisoners and captives; the oppressed, the destitute, the outcast. Behold their tears; *they* have no comforter!

But the happy turn, thus given to our own sorrows, will not issue in a durable peace and joy, unless we follow up the practical application, as described in Isaiah lviii. 7—11.

"Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me!"

Isaiah xxxviii. 14.

A Friend, to undertake our cause, when the mind wanders, and Satan harasses; such a Friend, too, as Jesus, our Advocate with the Father!—The believer, in his fainting, dying moments, should rest in this thought, LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

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"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." *Isaiah* L. 10.

The believer's faith often shines, to others around him, most brightly in the dark; though he himself may not have all the comfort of it. But, if he is content thus to glorify God, he shall have joy in the end.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."
Lamentations iii. 26.

This is the meek language of a holy man, cut off from all other good.

"My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 *Cor.* xii. 9.

We never know the need of a promise, till sorely pressed with temptations; nor its preciousness, till we earnestly plead with the Lord in prayer. At such a time, Jesus seems to come forth to us in his best: his words are few; but suitable, and abiding. St. Paul, after this, no more beseeches that the "thorn in the flesh" may be taken from him. Nay, he was enabled, by this grace, even to glory in his infirmities.

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"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." *Hebrews* xii. 12.

It is a poor condition of a believer, when affliction hinders him from prayer: it ought to quicken him to spread all his sorrows before the Lord.

"Trials make the promise sweet:
Trials give new life to prayer:
Trials bring me to His feet;—
Lay me low, and keep me there!"

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." *James* i. 4.

If the wisdom of God had seen any method better suited for perfecting our graces, He loves his children so well, that he would not have appointed tribulation as the way of doing this: for he does not willingly afflict or grieve his own beloved-ones. But since He has, in all ages, appointed this method, it is our duty to give time and patience, for his plan to be completely worked out. Perhaps, if we murmur at his way of sanctifying us, he may begin the purifying process all over again, and make the furnace seven times hotter. We ought not so much as to breathe the question, "How long?"

Blessed Saviour! shed abroad thy Spirit in our hearts; and enable us to say, in all things, Not my will, but Thine, be done! Thy way is best: thy time is best.

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VI.

PERSONS, ENJOYING A GOOD HOPE, THROUGH GRACE, IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." *Genesis* xlix. 18

Through all the days of Esau's wrath, and Laban's harsh treatment; through all the bitter distresses of my own family; through all my prayers, vows wrestlings, haltings; this is what I have aimed at Peace in a dying hour. And now, O my God and Saviour! I feel it; and I declare it, to the glory o Thy grace.

"The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." *Deut.* xxxiii. 27.

Those arms, that bore up Abel when he received the murderous blow, and bore up his spirit heavenward; those arms, on which Jacob stayed himself, as he blessed the Patriarchs; the arm, that lighted down on Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Belshazzar; the arms that fought for David, fettered the lions for Daniel, and held Nero fast for a season; the arms that have vanquished Satan, and all his legions—these are the arms, in which the believer quietly rests. There, my Almighty Saviour, let me lie, as a lamb in the Shepherd's bosom!

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"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5.

The care taken, in drawing up a person's last Will and Testament, is as nothing, compared with the ordering and establishing of that everlasting Covenant, which David, in his last words, here celebrates.

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." *Job* xix. 25—27.

The Book of Job abounds with painfully-affecting descriptions of man's mortality. These we should often meditate on, when in health: they will serve to tame the earthly, sensual, and devilish affections of the natural heart. But when the dying believer actually begins to languish, generally speaking, it is better not to dwell on gloomy images. Rather, expatiate on the Health of the soul, as it lives and flourishes in Christ, and is complete in Him; and on the Hopes of the soul, as it looks out of its prison, to contemplate the bright "Latter Day," when Jesus the Redeemer shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

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"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." *Psalm* xxiii. 4.

A child is afraid of going into the dark, alone; but if his father goes before, and holds him by the hand, he dares to follow. Only, he keeps close; and he is glad to hear his father's voice, as well as feel his hand.—So let us follow Jesus, who has visited the tomb before us.

"And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

Psalm lv. 6.

Not from thy chastening hand, Heavenly Father, would I flee; for there is love in every correction of thy rod. Not from my post of service would I flee, though it may be a bed of languishing; for here Thou are glorified; and Jesus is near, to help and comfort. Not from the Church of the saints on earth would I flee, though the company of saints above be sweeter; for here I may edify them, and they me. But—from a vain world, under the tyranny of Satan; from the disorders of the visible Church; from a narrow mind, which understands so little of Divine Mysteries; from a cold heart, that retains so little of Divine Love; from the infirmity of wandering affections; from unbelieving fears; from this body of death—I would pray,

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"Good Lord, in thine own time, deliver me!—and, till thy time shall come, let me seek rest nowhere but in Thee!"

Return, then, unto thy rest, O my soul!

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God! forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." *Psalm* lxxi. 17, 18.

To proclaim the love of Jesus, is the delight of every saint; and, blessed be that Saviour! age, which is weak in other things, need not be weak in prayer and praise. Words may be few and feeble: but "Hallelujah," from a dying believer, is like Heaven opened for a moment, to make us feel what Heaven is.

"Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." *Isaiah* lx. 20.

No gradual rising from the early darkness, to the dawning, and onward to mid-day; no declining sun, no slowly-lengthening shadows, twilight, and returning night; no clouds intervening, no eclipses; but, "sacred, high, eternal noon."

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"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Romans viii. 18.

Look away from the distracting fear of death, lest Satan should tempt you by that fear. Turn away your eyes from suffering, and your ears from what Satan would whisper. How can you tell, or any one else, whether the act of dying will be, to you, hard or easy? You are not to know any thing about it. Fix the eye of faith on Christ. Help us, Lord, by thy free Spirit, to do so, that we may depart in peace!

"For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 *Corinthians* v. 1.

The manner of dying is very various; and it is foolish for us to attempt to fancy what kind of death *we* shall die. The body is compared to a tent. Hezekiah, under a sudden and excruciating attack of sickness, says, "Mine age is removed as a shepherd's tent;" blown away by a hurricane. With others, the tent is taken down, a pin at a time; and folded up.—Now a wise believer does not inquire, after what manner he is likely to die: but he looks beyond death, to the house preparing for him above, founded on the Rock of ages.

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"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

2 Timothy iv. 6—8.

It is the "love of Christ's appearing" that sets the humblest believer, in some sense, on a level with this exalted Apostle and Martyr. For the poorest among Christ's genuine disciples, there is laid up the undeserved reward, the free gift, of a crown of righteousness.

"There remaineth, therefore, a Rest to the people of God." *Hebrews* iv. 9.

A Rest; or, a "keeping-of-Sabbath." When we have been peculiarly favoured on some Lord's Day, with communications of love, and joy unspeakable and full of glory; this was a glimpse and earnest of the Everlasting Sabbath above;—vouchsafed, in order to quicken our pilgrim-steps, as we go on from strength to strength.

"O long-expected Day, begin;
Dawn on this world of woe and sin!
Fain would we leave this weary road,
And sleep in death, to rest with God!"

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Other passages, suited to the circumstances of the dying believer, might be given at full length, with a few remarks: but a simple reference to them must suffice. Read Psalm xvii. 15. lxxiii. 25, 26. Matthew xxv. 34—40. Luke ii. 29, 30. xxiii. 43. John x. 27—30. xi. 25, 26. xiv. 2, 3. Romans viii. 31—39. 1 Corinthians xv. 49—58. Ephesians ii. 4—7. Philippians i. 21—23. 1 Thessalonians iv. 13—18. 2 Timothy i. 12. Hebrews xii. 22—24. 1 John iii. 1, 2. Revelation vii. 15—17. xiv. 13. xxi. 3, 4. xxii. 3—5.

It will have been observed, by those who attend the death-beds of pious persons, that, toward the closing scene, a single verse, quoted from the Inspired Volume, comes with peculiar authority and consolation to the inmost soul. It seems, at such a time, as though the Holy Ghost were speaking more intimately, in His own words, to the departing spirit.

May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

THE END.

RICHARD WATTS, CROWN COURT, TEMPLE BAR.

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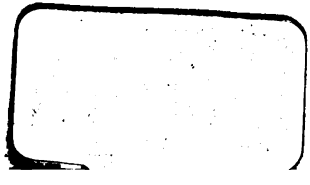

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